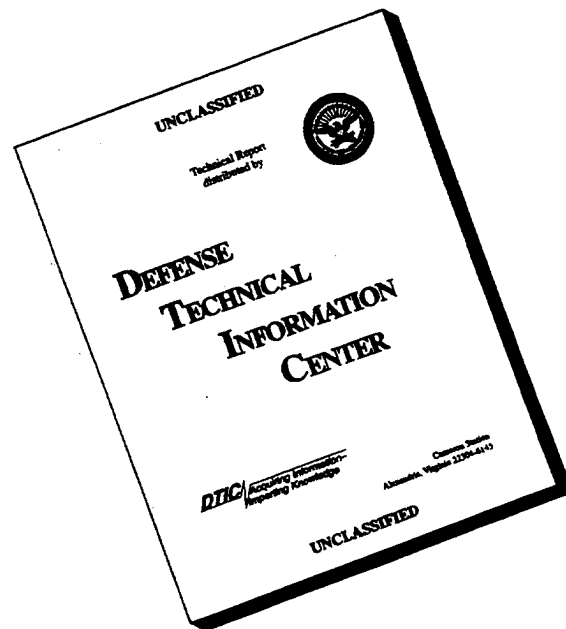


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SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

ANTHONY M. RAPER, MAJ, USA

B.A., North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1979

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR by MAJ Anthony M. Raper,
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This study is a historical analysis of selected special operations missions in the American Civil War. The analysis is intended to determine if there are lessons to be learned from these operations that are applicable to present special operations forces.

Selected Civil War direct action and unconventional warfare missions are examined in detail from the planning stage through mission completion and analyzed at the tactical level from the perspectives of special operations applications of the principles of war and the SOF imperatives. Union and Confederate special operations are examined for effectiveness against modern doctrine from the operational and strategic levels.

The study reveals that many of the lessons learned from a historical analysis of Civil War special operations missions are equally important to success today. The modern special operator who conducts a review of similar operations from the past or who has a good historical background in these missions has a great advantage when conducting special operations today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It was a bitterly cold night in February of 1865 when Lieutenant Jesse McNeill and his men slipped into the town of Cumberland, Virginia. Much of the Confederacy was under Federal control or lay in ruins, and the Army of Northern Virginia was waiting for the last act of the play in the frozen trenches around Richmond and Petersburg. Bluffing their way past the various sentries and pickets, at 3:00 A.M., the small band of partisan rangers made their way into the very center of the sleepy town. Quickly, they split into four squads and went about their designated missions. One group went to destroy the telegraph office. Another visited the stables to obtain fresh mounts. The other two parties proceeded to two hotels where they awakened and captured two Union major generals, George Crook and Benjamin F. Kelley, and spirited them out of town without a single casualty. The only oversight of the operation was the fact that among the other hotel guests still sleeping were Brigadier General James A. Garfield and Major William McKinley, two future Presidents of the United States. The time spent on target: less than ten minutes. The mission was a complete success and buoyed the spirits of a dying cause.

One hundred and five years later, a composite group of fifty-six Special Forces personnel make their way across denied territory on a mission for which they have trained for seven months. Arriving on their target, they split up and move to their various tasks. Spending only 27 minutes on the ground, they move with practiced ease and depart the area

quickly. Unfortunately, due to an intelligence failure, the targets, 55 Americans held as prisoners of war, are not recovered.² The Son Tay rescue mission is headlined as a failure. The American people ask why. What went wrong?

Are there parallels between these two missions? Could the actions of a few selected individuals pioneering a new sort of warfare over a century before offer valuable lessons for today's special forces? Would a look into the actions of the special operators of the War Between the States provide insights benefiting the modern warrior?

Most of the practitioners of special operations during the American Civil War are relative unknowns. Many officers today could name John S. Mosby and William Quantrill, perhaps Nathan B. Forrest and John H. Morgan. Few are sufficiently well versed in the operations of Jesse and Hanse McNeill, "Stovepipe" Johnson, James J. Andrews, or Lige White. These men, operating in small bands near the border areas, tied up many thousands of Federal soldiers and extended the war by as much as eight months.³ Unconventional warfare and direct action were their stock in trade and some became very good at it.

Military success is frequently related to the degree of understanding of historical lessons and to the ability to apply them to current situations. This is no less relevant to the newer branches of the Army. While "Special Forces" and "Special Operations" have been formally in existence only since World War Two, the history of the United States is replete with examples from the very beginning of the services' military experience. During the Civil War, just as a number of technical and tactical innovations were revolutionizing warfare, the emergence of a new, evolutionary type of warfare was making itself felt across the nation. Guerrillas, saboteurs, partisans, and raiders were operating in all theaters and in many cases, quite effectively. The

U.S. military today has consolidated these types of warfare and developed a doctrine for the conduct of these "special operations." If this doctrine is applied to the practitioners of the early 1860s, lessons learned from this conflict have the potential of being applicable to modern special operations forces. This thesis will examine the record of selected special operations in the American Civil War to determine if there are insights to be gained from an examination of these operators and if in fact their actions have some timeless merit for current special operations forces. While some have examined the campaigns of these men, none have analyzed and compared the history with current special operations doctrine.

This thesis will analyze special operations in the War Between the States in the perspective of modern special operations doctrine. It will establish definitions of key terms and describe the present special operations doctrine. Then, the thesis will explore selected Civil War operations in light of the current doctrine for applicability and will discover if there are lessons to be learned today. Finally, the thesis will state lessons to be learned and applicability to today's forces.

The thesis will answer the primary research question: Are there special operations lessons to be learned from the American Civil War? This thesis will look at selected battles and campaigns by units and leaders fitting the special operations mission profiles. It will examine missions throughout the planning cycle, infiltration, mission execution, exfiltration and post mission assessment. One secondary question that must be answered will be whether certain Civil War operations and units may be defined as special operations. Another question will be: What are the lessons to be learned, and are they applicable today? Finally, is modern doctrine historically relevant;

that is, does modern doctrine apply to Civil War special operations as well?

Special operations have been conducted for many years. However, the formal organization of special operations forces (SOF) and the doctrine for their employment have only been in existence for the past half century. While Roger's Rangers and others employed many of the same principles as today's SOF warriors, they were members of ad hoc organizations formed in wartime as adjuncts to the regular forces, essentially fighting as independent forces. Today's special operations forces fight as members of units trained and equipped for this purpose as part of a standing army.

With the Civil War came formally established special operations forces, authorized and equipped by their governments, with recognition by both warring parties as legitimate combatants. More than 75 years would pass before the United States would formally organize and employ such forces again, this time, during the Second World War. Shortly after that conflict, a school would be permanently established to train US forces in special warfare. During Korea, tactics and techniques would evolve in the background of the larger, conventional conflict.

Not until the conflict in Vietnam did the United States have the opportunity to fully test the majority of the emerging special operations capabilities, and then only because of a young president's belief that this was the warfare of the future.

Since then, special operations have been a part of every conflict the United States has engaged in, as well as conducting the lion's share of peacetime engagement. Only in 1986 did the US Army formally recognize the need for a full-time, committed group of personnel practicing this revolutionary type of warfare, and this, only at the insistence of the US Congress.

In the past nine years, many ideas have been put forward on how to best employ special operations forces, and the doctrine has continued to evolve. Extensive comparisons have been made with special operations of World War Two, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War, but few have looked to the special operators of the American Civil War for lessons to be learned. There are historical parallels with ample comparative examples and that the basic principles of special operations remain constant across the years.

The starting point for this paper will be the definition of the terms of reference for special operations. While historical examples may not meet all aspects of modern descriptions, such as air operations and certain communications requirements, in many cases, the descriptions are uncannily accurate of Civil War missions and units. Joint Pub 3-05, Doctrine for Special Operations, defines special operations as follows:

Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during peacetime competition, conflict, and war, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, non-special operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO.⁴

Special operations are further defined by particular characteristics; again, Joint Pub 3-05 describes characteristics of special operations:

- a. Are primarily offensive, usually of high physical and political risk, and directed at high value, critical and often perishable targets. They offer the potential for high returns, but rarely a second chance should a first mission fail.
- b. Are often principally politico-military in nature and subject to oversight at the national level. Frequently demand operator-level detailed planning and rapid coordination with other commands, services, and Government agencies.

- c. Often require responsive joint ground, air, and maritime operations and the C2 architecture permanently resident in the existing SOF structure.
- d. May frequently be covert or clandestine.
- e. Are frequently prosecuted when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible for either military or political reasons.
- f. Rely on surprise, security, and audacity and frequently employ deception to achieve success.
- g. Are often conducted at great distances from established support bases, requiring sophisticated communications and means of infiltration, exfiltration, and support to penetrate and recover from hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.
- h. May require patient, long term commitment in a given operational area to achieve national goals through security assistance and/or nation assistance activities or extended UW [Unconventional Warfare] operations. Often the training and organization of indigenous forces are required to obtain these objectives.
- i. Frequently require discriminate and precise use of force; a mix of high and low technology weapons and equipment; and often rapid development, acquisition, and employment of weapons and equipment not standard for other DOD forces.
- j. Are primarily conducted by specially recruited, selected, and trained personnel organized into small units tailored for specific missions or environments. Missions often require detailed knowledge of the culture(s) and language(s) of the country where employed.
- k. Require detailed intelligence, thorough planning, decentralized execution, and rigorous detailed rehearsal.

Characteristics a, e, f, j, and k are particularly applicable to Civil War SOF. Other characteristics, such as b, c, h, and i are not, due primarily to technological differences.

Special Operations are generally directed toward five specific mission types. While these are not all-inclusive, they help to define special operations and distinguish them from similar missions performed by conventional units. These missions are unconventional warfare (UW), direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), foreign internal defense (FID), and counterterrorism (CT). Of these, the Civil War

provides excellent examples of at least the first two. By far, the majority of the Civil War special operations were unconventional warfare missions. Special reconnaissance typically requires a dedicated SOF unit trained specifically in SR operations. Most Civil War reconnaissance was tactical. While some strategic reconnaissance was conducted, it was primarily collected by spying, which is not a special operations mission. The few operators who conducted an SR type of intelligence collection are very thinly documented and usually acted alone. FID was not conducted during the Civil War. Even if given Civil War examples of counterterrorism, most references for the doctrine of CT are classified and compartmented access programs. FM 31-20, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations, defines these specific missions as follows:

Counter-Terrorism - Offensive measures taken by civilian and military agencies of the government to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. The primary mission of special operations forces in this interagency activity is to apply specialized capabilities to preclude, prevent, and resolve terrorist incidents abroad.⁶

Direct Action - Short duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target; or to destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material. In the conduct of these operations, special operations forces may employ raid, ambush or other direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage.⁷

Evasion and Escape - The procedures and operations whereby military personnel and other selected individuals are enabled to emerge from an enemy-held or hostile area to areas under friendly control. (JCS Pub 1-02)⁸

Foreign Internal Defense - (DOD) Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. (JCS Pub 1-02)⁹

Guerrilla Warfare - Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy held or hostile territory by irregular, primarily indigenous forces. (Joint Pub 1-02)¹⁰

Sabotage - An act or acts with intent to injure, interfere with or obstruct the national defense of a country by willfully injuring or

destroying, or attempting to injure or destroy, any national defense or war material, premises, or utilities, to include human or natural resources. (Joint Pub 1-02)¹²

Special Reconnaissance - SR operations are reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special operations forces to obtain and verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance. (USCINCSOC)¹³

Unconventional Warfare - A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed to varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility covert or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence collection, and evasion and escape.¹⁴

For the purpose of this thesis, modern Special Forces are defined by FM 31-20 as "the component of Army SOF (ARSOF) which plans, conducts, and supports special operations in all operational environments in peace, conflict, and war."¹⁴ Essentially, Special Forces are the primary units that perform special operations.

The American Civil War will be defined as the period of conflict between the United States of America and the Confederate States of America during the period of declared hostilities from 1861 to 1865.

This topic will be limited by the fact that, as very few units were organized as special operations forces, the nature of the mission will establish if the unit or individual was, in fact, performing special operations. Additionally, many of the records on both sides, but particularly those of the Confederacy, were destroyed during the war. An air of secrecy surrounds many of the operations, as for example, the rumor of Lincoln's assassination by a Confederate conspiracy would have been dangerous to discuss for those who would have had knowledge of it. Many of the Confederate records pertaining to this

period list simply "\$10 to Mr. X for services rendered." Understandably enough, citizens on both sides were reluctant to have their actual identities connected with espionage, sabotage, or subversion activities. Finally, some of the information is speculative due to the emotions of the war, and many of the opposing official accounts are missing as stated above.

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 1 defines my thesis and briefly explains the terminology used in it. Chapter 2 describes Civil War special operations units and employment in the various mission types. In chapter 3, selected Civil War direct action missions are examined. Chapter 4 concentrates on unconventional warfare missions. Each mission examined in chapters 3 and 4 concludes with a brief summary of positive and negative aspects with modern relevancy, as well as any other noteworthy observations at the tactical level, examined from the perspective of the SOF application of Clausewitz' principles of war. At the end of each of these chapters is a conclusion with a comparative analysis of the missions in view of the SO imperatives, and any trends or commonalties noted. Chapter 5 consolidates the lessons learned overall and generalizes about the Civil War special operations. This final chapter focuses on the relevance of the lessons learned to modern day special operations forces and their doctrine, particularly at the strategic and operational levels.

This study will be relevant to both special operations personnel with a professional curiosity, and to those individuals with an interest in the Civil War. Those who are able to take the historical lessons and apply them properly to current operations have a great advantage over those who are making the same mistakes that were made 130 years ago.

There are many valuable lessons to be learned from the special operations history of the United States, much as people point to Mao Tse

Tung's guerrilla campaign when discussing revolutionary warfare. As SOF is one of the Army's three types of forces, it is incumbent upon the conventional light or heavy officer to understand SOF, its capabilities, limitations, and employment. Additionally, this may better prepare the conventional officer to protect his force from enemy special operations forces operating against them. Finally, it is hoped that a thorough understanding of Civil War special operations may better prepare special forces personnel for future operations.

Endnotes

¹Virgil C. Jones, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders (McLean, VA: EPM Publications Inc., 1956), 356-362.

²Department of the Army. FM 100-25, Army Special Operations (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), 2-3.

³Jones, ix.

⁴Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Pub 3-05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), GL-20.

⁵Ibid., I - 4-5.

⁶Ibid., Glossary-7.

⁷Department of the Army. FM 31-20, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1990), Glossary-7.

⁸Ibid., GL-8.

⁹Ibid., Glossary-7-8.

¹⁰Joint Pub 3-05 (1992), GL-9.

¹¹Ibid., GL-18.

¹²Ibid., Glossary-11.

¹³FM 31-20 (1990), 3-1.

¹⁴Ibid., 1-12.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

What was the impact of special operations on a war fought over 130 years ago? Some experts feel that the contributions of the Civil War special operators "almost certainly . . . prolonged the war in the Eastern Theater by eight or nine months."¹ This is a substantial payoff for largely uncoordinated efforts by a very limited number of personnel.

In order to fully comprehend the lessons of the War Between the States, one must understand the terms of reference and the setting for special operations as practiced in the Civil War.

Special operations in the American Civil War sprang from a rich heritage of resistance movements, both in the United States and around the world. It is important to understand what constituted special operations in the period, and how those units were organized. To do this requires some background knowledge of special operations and the Civil War itself. Finally, the limits of the discussion must be delineated.

The history of special operations is long and distinguished. From recorded time, small groups of men have been asked to accomplish great feats with few resources. The Trojan Horse was one of the early examples of what would today be a direct action mission. Resistance movements have been common throughout history, such as the Spanish uprising against Napoleon in 1808 which defined guerrilla warfare and gave it its name. In World War II, small groups of men like David Stirling's Special Air Service (SAS) conducted special reconnaissance,

ranging deep behind enemy lines in search of critical information on enemy disposition and intent. The entire anti-colonial period was one of resistance, guerrilla warfare, counter guerrilla warfare, insurrection, stability operations, foreign internal defense, and sabotage. The teachings of Karl Marx initiated one of the bloodiest periods in world history as parties fought to overthrow existing governments and impose their own, or to resist the attempts. Mao Tse Tung fought the largest guerrilla campaign in history and wrote the book that was to become the definitive work on the subject and the pattern for millions to follow.

Certainly, Americans have had their share of practitioners of special operations throughout history. From the French and Indian war, Americans like Robert Rogers (of Rogers' Rangers fame) allied themselves with the British to fight the French and Indians in irregular units using irregular tactics. Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," and his men fought a guerrilla campaign against the British in the War for Independence. The Civil War was replete with special operators. In the Indian Wars, the Native Americans conducted a guerrilla campaign against the United States. The Philippine Insurrection was, for the United States, a counter guerrilla war. World War II was the first time that the United States formally organized and trained units to fight as special operations forces. The Rangers, Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Merrill's Marauders, and the Jedburgh teams were all products of the Second World War. The United States sponsored guerrillas and resistance movements in a number of occupied countries. Many American-sponsored movements were in colonies that declared their independence after the war and were then prepared to defend their newfound freedom. In Korea, the United States again called upon Ranger units and direct action teams of American advisors and indigenous team members to conduct

direct action and unconventional warfare missions. In the 1950s, the Army organized Special Forces units and modern special operations took its present form. American special operations personnel conducted peacetime engagements across the globe as President Kennedy saw the need for small groups of men to fight America's wars and help U.S. allies resist communist-sponsored insurgencies. In Vietnam, Special Forces conducted DA, UW, SR, and FID missions. In 1983, Rangers conducted DA, and Special Forces performed DA, SR, CT, and later, FID missions to eject Cubans from the island of Grenada. Later, in 1989, Rangers participated in DA, while SF conducted DA, SR, CT, and FID to restore democratic rule in Panama. The following year, during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Special Forces, with little fanfare, practiced DA, UW, SR, CT, and FID, to include coalition warfare operations.

During the past forty years, in peacetime as well as war, Americans have conducted special operations around the world. The doctrine for these operations came from U.S. and international experience. The doctrine is constantly evolving, but certain core truths hold true across the test of time. The Union and Confederate soldiers who practiced special operations during the Civil War have left a legacy of experience, both good and bad. An historical analysis of selected Civil War special operations missions may yield knowledge that spans time.

A number of Civil War units, Union and Confederate, practiced special operations. Both sides recognized some special operations units as legitimate combatants. Neither side would acknowledge certain other groups. There were several basic types of units that claimed to have conducted special operations.

The easiest type of unit to define was conventional units conducting special operations. These were regular units, with

commissioned officers and regular enlisted soldiers on detached duty conducting independent missions. Some were individuals or small groups sent on missions, such as the Confederate operators in Canada and the North. As they ranged far from their base areas, these men conducted what would currently be defined as direct action missions.

The next were guerrilla units, such as the partisan rangers, recruited and officially sanctioned, such as John S. Mosby's 43rd Battalion of Virginia Cavalry. The government issued commissions to these officers and formally recognized their units. Legal opinions provided personnel from both these types of units full protection as they served under recognized leaders, wore distinctive uniforms (to more or less degree), and followed the accepted rules of warfare themselves. As these men operated in defined areas near their bases of support, it can be deduced that they conducted unconventional warfare operations, to include guerrilla war and sabotage.

Another type of unit was harder to define. Generally called "war rebels" by the authorities of the time, the men from these units were regular soldiers who had found reason to leave their units and return home, some with permission, and some without it. These men formed loosely organized units under the leadership of men who usually held commissions offered by their governments. Many of these units were in Federal occupied areas. Their legal status was somewhat more tenuous, and subject to interpretation by the local Federal commander when required. Tied to a base of support in their communities, these men were also conducting unconventional warfare.

The next group was the bushwhackers. These men would gather in small units to snipe or ambush targets of opportunity, usually military, and were not opposed to appropriating property from their foes or to conducting missions for this sole purpose. Normally, the leaders of

these bands had no commission; and the members had no uniforms. There was little adherence to the accepted laws of war, or criminal law. When captured, these men received little or no protection as guerrillas and instead were classified as criminals. While some would maintain that these forces constitute a resistance movement practicing unconventional warfare, today, these men would likely be considered criminals. Therefore, we would not consider them to be practicing any type of special operations.

The final group was the outlaws. These men robbed and killed for their own purposes, using the war as an excuse. Union and Confederate, military or civilian alike feared these men. They had no formal leadership, no uniforms, and no respect for the law. Outlaws used the war to settle old scores. When captured, these men were more often than not given a drumhead trial and executed. These men were outright criminals and did not practice any sort of organized warfare whatsoever.

Some bands drifted between unit types, and most were not above looting or pillaging, if the opportunity presented itself. Men such as Quantrill's band, operated in any of several different types, occasionally combining military missions with criminal acts, such as the raid and sack of Lawrence, Kansas.

During the war, most units were company sized or smaller. While some were organized as battalions or regiments, few would assemble more than 200 members at any given time. For the purpose of this analysis, any large units, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest's or John Hunt Morgan's commands, were prohibitively large (over 2,000 men) and served primarily as conventional cavalry units.

The majority of regular units remained organized and operated for extended periods or campaigns. Most guerrillas mustered for a

meeting or single mission and then disbanded to plan and meet again for subsequent operations. War rebels usually organized only for the mission at hand and then disbanded until the next operation.

Units conducting special operations carried a wide variety of weapons and equipment. Given the supply situation in the South, there should be no great surprise that the Confederates frequently had to acquire their arms and equipment from Federal forces by battlefield recovery. Most guerrillas furnished their own equipment, at least initially. Since there was no table of organization and equipment for these units, many of them were ad hoc. The guerrillas and some of the direct action forces frequently found it convenient to wear captured uniforms and civilian clothing. Many times there was a very fine line between special operations and spying.

Because of the limited transportation assets and the fact that most people used the horse as the primary means of travel, mounted personnel in small units were not necessarily cavalry. Most of the personnel conducting special operations rode during their missions. For this thesis, the horse was merely an infiltration platform, like the railroad or a ship.

At various times, the Confederacy found it advantageous to employ some of the more notorious units, or at least, to look the other way. Eventually, the depredations reached a point where the government revoked their unit status and commissions and sent them on their way, at least officially. Some of the more successful units lost their status after questionable actions and were assimilated into the conventional forces. Their status was particularly offensive to the conventional area commanders when they refused to cooperate or even acknowledge the authority of the regional commander.

For this analysis, individuals on detached service, conventional units, or organized units ranging far from their base of support on specific offensive missions are considered to be on direct action missions. This would include units such as the Andrews raiders, and the cross-border operations from Canada.

Units operating in a specific area with a defined base of support are conducting unconventional warfare operations, to include guerrilla warfare and sabotage. This would include Mosby, McNeill, White, and most of the Partisan Rangers.

The Confederacy conducted the majority of the Civil War special operations, and the Union took steps to protect itself. The Union increased security for key resources and high value targets, such as transportation nodes and supply depots. Federal authorities attempted to protect the Union sympathizers in Confederate or guerrilla areas. The Federals established static defenses and conducted more aggressive patrolling. In some cases, the Union forces held families of known or suspected guerrillas hostage.⁴ Directives, such as the infamous General Orders Number 100, were issued in an attempt to establish a coherent policy for dealing with the various bands and types of guerrillas.⁵ Frequently, Union commanders held local civilians responsible for guerrilla activities.⁶ In some cases, the Federals conducted reprisals against the families of guerrillas themselves.⁷ On occasion, the Northerners cleared entire areas of civilian populace, and the families forcibly ejected or relocated under suspicion of harboring guerrillas.⁸ The Federals organized and fielded a number of counter guerrilla units to little effect.⁹ Many of these actions were in fact counterproductive, and implementation of draconian, heavy-handed measures, as expected, caused guerrilla support to grow.¹⁰ One hundred years later, in the

jungles of Southeast Asia, the U.S. would do the same thing, with the same effect.

The geography of the United States and Confederate States was conducive to special operations. Because the long boundary between the two nations was not generally located along well-defined and defensible terrain features, crossing the border was relatively easy. Neither nation had the capacity to defend the entire border, so most of it remained unsecured. In the Eastern theater, conventional operations were generally restricted to a small area between Washington and Richmond. Rather than defending borders, the armies maneuvered against one another, or the opposing capitals. Geography ranged across the spectrum from coastal to forest to mountainous to plains and all variations in between. Mountains and mobility corridors generally ran from north to south. The hydrography had a number of major and minor rivers flowing generally from north to south to the Gulf and east to the Atlantic. Most were fordable at numerous points. The climate ranged from bitterly cold in the winter to extreme heat and humidity in the summer. Precipitation was common in all areas, but snow generally occurred only in the North and in mountainous regions. Population density was low in most border states, which were easy to cross undetected, except in the Virginia-District of Colombia-Maryland area.

The prewar transportation systems, rail, road, and river still existed, and some civilian traffic crossed the borders, even during the War, so infiltration of small special operations units was not difficult. Troops only lightly defended even key crossing sites over rivers. In some cases, the systems passed through enemy or guerrilla controlled territory, like the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.¹¹

The population of the South was more rural than the heavily urbanized Northeast. This gave the Confederacy the initial edge in

soldiers as they were more accustomed to life in the field, horsemanship, and small arms. As the guerrillas went, they had the liberty of fighting in their own areas, which they knew, with assurance of support from some of their neighbors when needed. With allowances for accents, given the number of soldiers from border states on both sides, most Americans spoke the same language and could pass as members of the others' camp. The larger North substantially outnumbered the free male population of the Confederacy and could more easily sustain the losses caused by the savage conventional war. As the South lost territory, it also lost the recruiting base of the area.¹²

The situation called for a strong central government coordinating the total war effort. Unfortunately, the loose grouping of states comprising the Confederacy had seceded to avoid a strong federal government, and continued to do so as members of the Confederacy. This led to problems coordinating the war effort as well as the various special operations activities. Large numbers of sympathizers and people in opposition to the government policies resided in both the United States and the Confederacy. The Confederacy courted numerous foreign governments seeking official international recognition. Very few population control measures were in effect.

While many made an early call to support guerrilla operations and the Confederate government sanctioned it,¹³ eventually problems caused the government to withdraw that support.¹⁴ Special operations forces frequently operated under a convoluted chain of command. Many reported directly to the War Department or, in some cases, corresponded directly to the commander in chief. This did nothing to endear them to conventional commanders of their respective regions, who already resented the guerrillas drain on increasingly limited manpower.¹⁵ Many units conducted special operations without coordination with

conventional force commanders who were affected by them. The synergy of coordinated operations was therefore missing. The Federals began the war at relative military parity with the South. Due to the population, industrial, transportation, and economic advantages of the North, the situation continually deteriorated for the Confederacy.

The Confederacy had limited economic means and a small industrial base. This meant that there were shortages of many military items, making raiding a rewarding proposition. Most guerrillas armed and equipped themselves, operating with little governmental assistance. The Confederate currency, never strong, underwent tremendous inflation near the end of the war, creating further pressure on the government and the economy. The primarily agrarian society had to get by with a large part of the manpower off to war. The guerrilla, remaining at home, was free to work his fields when not on an operation. Food supplies, while not abundant, were adequate in many areas until late in the war when Sheridan stripped the Shenandoah Valley and when Sherman completed his march to the sea. Problems with supply were mostly due to transportation difficulties or state sovereignty issues. Industrial production was limited, especially after the loss of Tennessee. The early blockade of most of the ports had a serious effect, due as much to inability to freely export commodities as to import war material. Loss of control of the Mississippi was particularly critical.

A large number of Federal forces were tied down in pacifying guerrilla controlled areas.¹⁶ This meant that the well-regulated guerrilla was a very cost effective option. Secrecy cloaked other special operations personnel and unit budgets, but one can assume these generated a positive return, or they would have been quickly canceled.¹⁷

The Federal government challenged the legal status of the guerrilla early in the War. The Union executed several captured

guerrillas, and continually threatened to execute more. The Federal government consulted Francis Leiber, who had been an authority in Europe on the legal aspects of warfare and was living in New York, for the definitive legal opinion. He concluded that guerrillas meeting certain requisites, such as the partisan rangers, were legally entitled to protection as soldiers.¹⁸ This legitimized the status of guerrillas holding commissions, such as Mosby and McNeill, but marginalized those who did not.

For this thesis, special operations forces and missions will be limited to the descriptions above. In subsequent chapters, examples of each type of historically applicable mission will be examined, and insights presented of benefit to the modern special operations counterpart.

This chapter has briefly covered the historical background of special operations worldwide. Terms of reference have been defined that will be used to look at examples of the various mission types for lessons to be learned. A quick overview has been conducted of the types of units, their composition, size, and equipment. A brief examination has been made of the employment and missions of these units, and the countermeasures taken against them. Finally, an overview of the war itself was conducted, looking at the geography, transportation, demographics, political situation, military factors, the economy, and legal issues.

Now the terms of reference have been defined and the setting established for special operations as practiced in the Civil War. The following chapters will look at specific missions for special operations lessons to be learned.

Endnotes

¹Jones, ix.

²James B. Martin, "Black Flag Over the Bluegrass," Register of the Kentucky Historical Society 4, No. 86 (Winter 1988): 352-375.

³Michael Fellman, Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 98-100.

⁴Ibid., 157.

⁵Ibid., 82-84.

⁶Ibid., 95-97.

⁷Richard S. Brownlee, Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 157-179.

⁸Ibid., 95.

⁹Jones, 81-82.

¹⁰Carl B. Beamer, Gray Ghostbusters: Eastern Theater Counterguerrilla Operations in the Civil War, 1861-1865 (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 7-9.

¹¹Ibid., 114.

¹²Bruce Collins, "Was There a Guerrilla Option," History Today [Great Britain] 38 (November 1988), 39.

¹³Jones, 10-12.

¹⁴Fellman, 97-100.

¹⁵Jones, ix.

¹⁶Ibid., x.

¹⁷Phillip Van Doren Stern, Secret Missions of the Civil War (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1959), 23-26.

¹⁸Fellman, 82-84.

CHAPTER 3

DIRECT ACTION

In October 1943, Allied forces liberated Corsica and established a forward operating base for direct action (DA) and special reconnaissance (SR) missions into France and Italy. The Allies launched DA missions against Italian coastal installations, and between October and December 1943, small teams conducted feints along the coast to give the appearance of upcoming Allied conventional operations in the area. This was an economy of force measure, designed to divert Axis forces from the Allied advance out of the beachheads in southern Italy.

After sustaining the disastrous operations of 1863, the Confederacy decided in 1864 to open a new front against the Federals. The Confederate government established a "Peace Commission" in Canada, with fewer than a dozen personnel. Under the military leadership of a Confederate Army captain, various DA, SR, and UW plans were developed and executed from Canada with differing degrees of success. As small military forces became available, the "Peace Commission" committed them to a number of cross-border operations into the United States. Small bands of Confederates attacked towns in Vermont and Maine, set fire to New York City, organized resistance movements across the North, captured merchant vessels on the Great Lakes, and attempted to rescue large groups of Confederate prisoners held in Ohio. Understandably, this caused great turmoil within the Northern states, who called for troops and supplies to protect their respective areas. This led to public speculation as to the government's ability to secure their nation from

the Confederates, growing resentment to the war, and diversion of resources from the conventional fronts.

Were there similarities between the operation in Corsica and Confederate operations in Canada eighty years before?

Both of these missions were direct action operations. As terms were defined earlier, direct action missions are short duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target or to destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material. In the conduct of these operations, special operations forces may employ raid, ambush, or other direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage.¹

For this analysis, a study will be conducted of selected Civil War offensive operations of limited duration by small units directed against specific targets. These operations will be conducted by specially organized, equipped, and trained units operating away from their base of support. In this thesis, Civil War operations meeting these requirements will be considered as direct action missions.

An analysis of the details of some of the Civil War direct action missions from the perspective of modern SOF doctrine may contain lessons to be learned for modern special operations forces.

Several Civil War direct action missions will be examined for lessons learned. The first example will be the Andrews Raid of April 1862. Next, two of the Canada cross-border operations will be analyzed, the October 1864 raid on Saint Albans, Vermont, and the September 1864 raid on the USS Michigan to free the Confederate prisoners on Johnson's

Island. The last mission to be studied will be the August 1864 raid to destroy the City Point, Virginia, ordnance depot.

The Andrews Raid

On 6 April 1862, James J. Andrews, a civilian spy for the Federal Army, proposed to Brigadier General Ormsby Mitchel that he lead a group of men on a mission to penetrate Confederate lines, seize a locomotive, and destroy key railroad bridges and disrupt communications on the Western and Atlantic Railroad between Chattanooga and Atlanta. This plan, which General Don Carlos Buell had approved, had been attempted previously but failed prior to execution due to the absence of key personnel.

The Western and Atlantic was key to the defense of the region as the single-track line was the only direct rail link between Chattanooga and Atlanta where it linked with other major railroad lines. Therefore, its operation was critical to any Confederate offensive or defensive movement in the Georgia-Tennessee-Alabama border area.²

Mitchel approved the plan, as it supported his own operation against Huntsville, Alabama, and Andrews moved quickly on the following day to execute. Possessed of an intimate knowledge of the railroad layout and schedule from earlier spying missions, Andrews set his plan in motion. Soliciting volunteers from three Ohio regiments, Andrews described the mission as a raid to burn railroad bridges and cut Confederate lines of communications, cautioning also of the danger of conducting espionage and of operating behind lines in civilian clothes. Except for three railroad engineers, he selected 23 of those who remained against unknown criteria, including one civilian.⁴

That very evening, on a farm east of Shelbyville, Tennessee, he issued each man his equipment and movement instructions, to include the contact plan. Upon issuing cash to travel and purchase civilian

clothes, and revolvers to some of the men, as needed, Andrews told each of them to make their way to Marietta, Georgia, by midnight on the tenth.⁴ As a cover story, he told the men to respond to questions by stating that they were volunteers from Fleming County, Kentucky, headed south to enlist in the Confederate Army. He further informed them that if necessary, to join a Confederate unit and escape later. As he divided the men into small traveling groups, a rain began to fall. Andrews gave the men a weather delay, allowing an extra 24 hours for movement to the linkup point.⁵ Several of the men were apprehended by Federal patrols prior to leaving Union lines. Andrews readily secured their release.⁶ Several times during their infiltration, the groups of men met Andrews along the way, and he assisted or encouraged them as required.

During the infiltration phase, most of the raiders left impressions on the populace along their route so remarkable as to enable the subsequent tracing of their steps. Several, but especially William Pittinger, were particularly well remembered.⁷ Two members were apprehended in Tennessee and pressed into the Confederate Army.⁸ This is indicative of the inexperience of the raiders and of the problems inherent with a volunteer group of personnel conducting special operations.

Most of the remaining twenty-one raiders traveled to Marietta on the eleventh of April via the evening train from Chattanooga. After a brief night's rest for the men at the local hotel, Andrews moved from room to room verifying identities and reviewing mission details.⁹ He and nineteen others boarded the northbound General just before 6:00 A.M. Two of his men had overslept, one of them the senior of his three engineers. At the next stop, Big Shanty, when the other passengers and crew disembarked for a twenty-minute breakfast stop, Andrews struck.

Coordinating with his men for them to remain on the train, Andrews and three men entered the unoccupied cab of the locomotive and seized control. Quickly moving his men into an empty boxcar and unhitching the remainder of the cars, Andrews and the General pulled out of Big Shanty station while the guards watched.¹⁰

At this point, the plan had gone relatively smoothly. Andrews had specifically selected Big Shanty for the hijack, knowing the station had no telegraph and could not warn the stations ahead. All that remained was to move north, destroying track and telegraph lines until they reached the bridges and put the torch to them. What Andrews did not know was that the General's conductor that day was Captain William A. Fuller, a singularly dedicated railroad employee, who set out after the departing train on foot, believing it to have been hijacked by deserters who would soon abandon it. His suspicion had been previously aroused by the boarding of a large number of unknown, young male passengers at the small Marietta station. Two other men accompanied him, one the engineer from the General, Jeff Cain, the other man, a railroad machine foreman who was riding the General that morning with the unlikely name of Murphy.¹¹

Andrews and the raiders, unaware of their pursuers, proceeded to remove rails and scatter crossties while steaming along to Cass Station, a wood stop, where as a cover story, Andrews told the railroad agent that the train was an emergency powder shipment for General Beauregard at Corinth. In an attempt to maintain a low profile as long as possible, Andrews drove past the locomotive Yonah, sitting on a spur, electing not to disable it or break any more track. He also observed the line's sixteen miles per hour speed limit. Unfortunately, Andrews had failed to procure any tools for track-breaking, and at each stop to cut the line, the raiders were forced to use their hands and a small

crowbar they commandeered. This caused inordinate delays and difficulty.¹² At Kingston, eleven miles north, they waited for a scheduled freight train to pass south. This train carried a flag, signaling another train following behind. When this train finally arrived, it was flagging another train as well. Unknown to Andrews, the freight activity was due to Brigadier General Mitchel, who had taken Huntsville and created a panic in Chattanooga. After an hour and twenty minutes of waiting, Andrews could wait no longer and used the powder train story on the switchman, who seemed doubtful. They pulled out and raced to Adairsville to beat the next southbound, due in only minutes.¹³

Meanwhile, Captain Fuller and company ran over two miles to Moon's Station, where they obtained a handcar. They pushed the handcar to Etowah, stopping to remove crossties littering the track, and once derailling at a break in the track. At Etowah, Fuller boarded the Yonah, which Andrews had opted not to disable, and made steam to Kingston, arriving just minutes after Andrews left. With the congestion in the yard from the southbound activity, Fuller had to abandon the Yonah, but he ran to the north side of the station and commandeered the last train, the William R. Smith. The chase was on. Abandoning the Smith when a break in the track forced them to stop, Captain Fuller ran three miles north where they met and boarded the Texas, a southbound freight. Fuller stopped the Texas in Adairsville to drop the cars and began pursuit again, with the engine in full reverse. Pulling into the station at Calhoun, Fuller spied a telegrapher sent to investigate the downed lines and added him to the party. Just two miles out of Calhoun, Fuller caught sight of the General, which had stopped to cut the telegraph lines and lift a rail.¹⁴

Having released only one end of the rail, Andrews was stunned to hear the whistle of the Texas, and the raiders boarded and moved out

smartly. Not knowing the size and strength of his pursuers, all he could do was attempt to outrun them. He dropped two boxcars in the path of the Texas, but running backward, the pursuers merely slowed and coupled up with them. The raiders made their last wood stop at Tilton, and attempted to block the track with a rail. At speeds over sixty miles per hour, Andrews and his men raced north, dropping crossties in their wake. Traveling with only one boxcar, with holes in both ends, the cover story was no longer credible and resupply impossible.¹⁵

While in pursuit, Fuller wrote a note to the commander at Chattanooga and dropped it off with his telegrapher at Dalton. The telegram got through just before Andrews cut the wire for the final time. By now the Confederate military had been alerted. Fuller stopped at Resaca for his last refueling, and the final leg of the chase was on.¹⁶

Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, Andrews slowed just enough for some of his men to jump clear. As the fuel ran out north of Ringgold, he tossed his well-stuffed saddlebags, rumored to contain cash and compromising documents, into the firebox. Two miles later, the train slowed and finally stopped, while the raiders fled into the woods separately.¹⁷

The Confederates rounded up all twenty of the raiders, plus the two who overslept, in slightly more than a week. Damage to the railroad and equipment was minimal and the Confederates quickly repaired it. Within days, Andrews was tried and convicted. Despite his temporary escape from confinement, the Confederates recaptured Andrews and on 2 June 1862 hanged him. The authorities tried twelve additional raiders and hanged seven of them on 18 June 1862. Eight men eventually escaped, and the remaining six were exchanged within a year.¹⁸

This mission generally meets the qualifications for Civil War special operations. The lack of designated "special operations" personnel to participate in special operations will recur throughout the period and is unavoidable. Otherwise the Andrews raid is almost a classic example of a direct action mission at the tactical level.

From the perspective of the SOF application of the principles of war, Andrews clearly understood his *objective*, which was the destruction of the critical nodes of the railroad and communications infrastructure. He focused all of his available resources against the *objective* in an effort to interdict it.

His mission clearly incorporated the principle of *offensive* action. All raids are *offensive* by nature. Andrews understood that an *offensive* action may be successfully conducted without unnecessary loss of life, and injured no one during the conduct of the operation. Unfortunately, his pursuit was essentially driven by a single man, Captain Fuller. If Andrews had known this and dropped off a counter-pursuit element to kill or disable Fuller early in the pursuit, he may have gotten away.

Andrews massed his force, perhaps excessively. When the time came, he had too many men to run, and too few to fight. A thorough mission analysis would have revealed this, and planning and rehearsals would have established an optimum number of raiders as well as their organization and equipment. His inability to destroy track quickly was a major cause of the mission failure.

His actions were certainly an *economy of force* operation, causing disproportionate enemy forces and activity to be dedicated to his elimination. Properly coordinated with General Mitchel, he could have diverted forces from the battle, or prevented reinforcement or movement had his mission succeeded.

The operation clearly incorporated the principle of *maneuver*, covering extensive territory. However, an unbranched, single-track railroad does not offer much in the way of *maneuver* options. A more experienced special operations leader would have realized this and prepared flexible alternatives and *maneuver* options. Perhaps if he had established teams of his men with horses prepositioned at various points along the railroad route, he would have been able to evade, even if the mission failed. The exfiltration phase of the operation was seriously flawed, depending entirely upon the locomotive remaining operational until they approached Federal lines and walking the rest of the way.

Andrews violated the principle of *unity of command*. While Andrews clearly was the commander, the number of men involved exceeded his personal span of control. It is unknown if he designated subordinate leaders, but certainly he could have used them. If the Confederates had killed Andrews early in the mission, it is likely the operation would have disintegrated shortly afterwards.

There was an excessive amount of *security* about the mission, which had an adverse impact. This is somewhat understandable, given the volunteer nature of his personnel, but the use of the same cover story for all members compromised, as a minimum, the two members who overslept and stayed behind.

The mission relied totally upon *surprise*, which was achieved. There was no way to anticipate the vigorous pursuit by Captain Fuller. Effective pre-mission planning and rehearsal would have developed a contingency plan to handle pursuit and attendant loss of *surprise* in later mission segments.

The raiders observed the principle of *simplicity*. This plan was simple and easily understood. However, the participants failed to

rehearse any of the critical tasks and, when the time came, did not possess the required tools for the mission.

The Andrews raid contains a number of lessons learned, mostly negative. Andrews, as the mission commander failed in several mission aspects from planning to execution, and paid for his errors with his life, along with several of his men. Modern special operations personnel can easily see how the violation of several common principles of war led to his demise. In the next direct action operation, we can see how another ad hoc force, under better leadership, was substantially more successful in an equally bold mission.

The Saint Albans Raid

On 19 October 1864, one of the strangest battles of the Civil War was fought hundreds of miles north of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lieutenant Bennett H. Young received mission approval in early October from the Confederate Commissioner to commence raids in Vermont. The Confederate leadership felt that the operations, of little tactical importance, would force the Union leadership to divert troops from operational units to protect towns on the northern border. Young was a twenty-year-old enlisted cavalryman who had ridden north with John Hunt Morgan in 1863 on his Ohio raid. He had been captured on the raid and escaped to Canada from a prison camp in Chicago only ten months before. Young was a man of action. Placed in charge of a group of escaped prisoners returning to the Confederacy, Young saved the day when he rallied the crew of his blockade runner and helped save the ship. This, along with his earlier contact with Mr. Clement C. Clay, the Confederate Peace Commissioner to Canada, attracted the attention of government officials and earned him a commission as a Lieutenant in the Confederate Army, with duties in Canada.¹⁹ His initial orders from Confederate Secretary of War Seddon were typically vague:

Lieutenant Bennett H. Young -- you will proceed without delay to the British Provinces, where you will report to Mr. C. C. Clay, Jr., for instructions. You will, under his direction, collect together such Confederate soldiers who have escaped from the enemy, not exceeding twenty in number, as you may deem suitable for the purpose, and will execute such enterprises as may be entrusted to you. You will take care to organize within the territory of the enemy, to commit no violation of the neutrality laws, and to obey implicitly the instructions of Mr. Clay. You and your men will receive from this gentleman transportation and the customary rations and clothing, or commutation therefore.²⁰

Quickly moving back to Canada, he established contact with Confederate Commissioner Clay and with Captain Thomas H. Hines, set about organizing other Confederate escapees into a unit. He then began conducting reconnaissance for potential targets. Unfortunately, his early efforts, including a raid with Hines to free 5,000 Confederate prisoners, were tied to the ill-fated Copperhead resistance movement, which Federal operatives infiltrated and subsequently folded like a house of cards.

In early October, Young crossed the border and returned to Chicago with a letter from Clay that stated, "Your suggestion for a raid upon accessible towns in Vermont, commencing with Saint Albans, is approved, and you are authorized and required to act in conformity with that suggestion."

In accordance with his mission approval, Young proceeded to brief his men and develop his plan. He covered target selection, which was Saint Albans, being the largest town near the border, easily infilled and exfilled. Young stressed the importance of the element of surprise. In order to comply with the neutrality laws and his orders, the mission briefing and all operational activity would occur in the United States and the men would wear components of Confederate uniforms on the raid. Finally, he briefed the infiltration plan, covering movement, the linkup plan, and cover stories.

Young and the remainder of the leaders arrived in Philipsburg, Quebec, just fifteen miles from Saint Albans, eight days before the raid.²² There they conducted further reconnaissance and detailed planning. During the next seven days, the remainder of his force arrived in the area. Lieutenant Young's intelligence gathering revealed three primary targets, which he personally reconnoitered. These targets were the locations of transportation assets (horses), enemy forces and weapons, and the exfiltration route to Canada. He identified the optimal day for the raid, with many of the citizens out of town but the banks open. Young set the time of the raid at 3:00 P.M., just before the banks closed. He discovered the presence of two veteran cavalry officers in the town, and expressed concerns over the location of a railroad shop with many workers only two blocks from the central bank district. He made plans to minimize the impact of these personnel during the raid. Young distributed fifty "Greek Fire" incendiary bottles from a carpetbag. His leadership meeting concluded with the observation that "The Yankee nerve spot is in his pocketbook. If we touch it, they'll squeal."²³ Young and his officers arrived in Saint Albans by the fifteenth. He briefed all of his men in small groups as to the threat and their part of the mission, and issued them revolvers. During his reconnaissance, Young met and entertained a young local lady, who provided him with additional information and served as a good cover for his strolls.

Like clockwork, just before 3:00 P.M., Lieutenant Bennett Young stepped onto the hotel porch, drew his revolver, and announced the capture of Saint Albans in the name of the Confederacy. As locals watched in disbelief, four of his men charged down the street brandishing their revolvers to discourage interference.

Simultaneously, his men, who were positioned about the town, commenced their coordinated action. Four men entered the Franklin County Bank and announced, "We are Confederate soldiers, sir. We have come to rob your banks and burn your town. We are taking possession in the name of the Confederate States of America, and we are acting under the orders of our military superiors."²⁴ Some sources state that they administered the Confederate oath of allegiance to those present, at gunpoint.²⁵ They thwarted the escape of the only customer present, robbed the bank, and locked the cashier and customer in the vault.

Five other men entered the Saint Albans Bank and explained "We're Confederate soldiers sent north to rob and pillage like General Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley. We have a large force and have taken over the town. We want all your money. Open the safe and the cash drawers."²⁶ While possibly less eloquent than the first group, the intent was no less clear. As they were robbing the bank, a customer, apparently believing the bank was locked in preparation of closing, knocked and was admitted upon showing a wad of cash. The raider escorted him to the counter and asked, "Do you wish to make a deposit, sir? I'm accepting funds on behalf of the Confederate States of America and would be happy to put you down on the list of voluntary contributors."²⁷ When asked if the Confederates had no respect for private property, one replied, "No more than Sherman or Sheridan."²⁸ Certainly, many Georgians and Virginians could sympathize, if not mourn his loss.

A third group of four raiders entered the First National Bank, locked the door, and gave the same speech as the other raiding parties. As they were leaving the bank after taking the cash, a minor scuffle occurred with a customer arriving late. The raiders resolved the incident without bloodshed, and the customer and cashier marched to the

detention area established by Young. At one point in the raid, Young, surprised by the quantity of gold seized, converted part of it to greenbacks to lighten the load on the horses.²⁹

While the bank robberies were proceeding splendidly, the procurement of transportation for the escape was not. Lieutenant Young had to shoot one local who resisted, but the man's belt buckle saved his life by stopping the ball. When another party was emptying the local stables, the owner drew a revolver and fired at Young three times, all misfires.³⁰

Young's raiders attempted to burn the town with firebottles, largely unsuccessfully due to recent rains. There was some resistance, but the raiders herded most of the locals to the detention area. Some townspeople armed themselves and began to snipe from the buildings. Security elements reported a party enroute from the railroad shop. Young decided, discretion being the better part of valor, to assemble his men and depart.

On their way out of town, one of the two cavalry officers identified earlier by Young organized local resistance and opened fire with a repeating rifle, hitting three of the raiders. Fortunately, Young's troops had seized most of the horses in the town, and while the locals rounded up horses and a posse, were able to build a small lead of about ten minutes.

Upon reaching a covered bridge, Young successfully firebombed it with the Greek Fire. This provident action destroyed the bridge and sufficed to delay the pursuers. Young had planned to hit the First National Bank at Sheldon on the way out, but his plan was foiled by the proximity of the pursuers. While the two parties exchanged shots, none were effective. After passing through Sheldon at a high rate of speed,

Lieutenant Young and his men split up and crossed the border back into Canada.

Later on the same day, Major General Dix, of the Military Department of the East, informed Secretary of War Stanton that he had learned of the raid. He also ordered the deployment of state forces to pursue, a company of Federals from Boston, and if the troops discovered Young and his men on the United States side of the international border, to "pursue them, if necessary, into Canada, and destroy them."³¹ The next day, the War Department clarified the order to limit movement into Canada to forces in contact, but by then the issue was moot.

After crossing the border, Young dismounted his men, had them remove their Confederate uniforms, and further dispersed them to evade capture in small groups. When he later discovered that the pursuers had captured several of his men, he returned to ensure their retention in Canada, rather than being turned over to the Vermonters. Unfortunately, as Young was returning the posse caught him, and he was almost hung by the lynch mob. After an unsuccessful attempt at escape, timely intervention by the Canadian authorities saved Young from the mob, and he and those of his men who were already captured were then interned in Canada.

The Canadians denied subsequent Federal appeals for extradition, as Canadian investigation determined that Lieutenant Young and his men were legitimate combatants, not criminals. There was no great effort by the Canadians to capture the remaining members of his party who were in public and at large.

The desired panic by the Federal government did not occur, although the local and state governments were outraged and thus organized the State and Home Guard units to respond. The Governor of Vermont requested assistance from Secretary of War Stanton, which he

agreed to provide in the forms of arms and troops, but only the weapons were actually sent.³²

At the end of the war, the Federal government dropped criminal charges, but denied Young and one of his subordinate leaders reentry into the United States.

This successful mission was classic direct action. Given the state of the War in late 1864, the opportunity for a small force operating across the border to divert large Federal forces was improbable, but deemed a necessary risk. Similar desperate acts can be seen in today's wars. Given the small number of Confederate forces involved, the majority being escaped prisoners of war, this was an excellent *economy of force* mission with high potential payoff. Lieutenant Young, only twenty years old, reflects leadership qualities needed in special operations units today. The boldness and audacity of the plan was admirable. The incorporation of the element of *surprise* was and is essential when operating beyond the range of support. The thorough planning and detailed reconnaissance is just as relevant now as it was in 1864. The key role of the leader in planning and briefing his forces, and the excellent compromise between operational *security* and adequate dissemination of information was a key factor. Lieutenant Young's superb understanding of the capabilities and limitations of his small ad hoc force was crucial in mission selection and planning.

The *objective* of the mission was crystal clear to Young and his men. It should be noted that this was not the only raid planned. Given sufficient success, the plan was to continue these raids along the Canadian border. The potential impact must, therefore, be examined in light of many of these planned raids. There were military, political, economic and psychological/informational *objectives*. Militarily, diversion of Federal forces north would assist with the plight of the

conventional Confederate forces. Politically, the invasion of northern soil in 1864, especially before the Union elections, could have had a tremendous impact and put great pressure on Union leadership. The economic impact of taking Union money from banks, at \$150,000 dollars per hit, must have been attractive. Psychologically and informationally, the impact of a series of raids on the people of the North, especially before the election, could have been an incentive to end the struggle, or at least justify the retention of state units for local defense. To the people of the South, who were undergoing just such depredations throughout the Confederacy at the hands of Sherman and Sheridan, the psychological impact of these raids could have been enormous had it been widely disseminated.

Lieutenant Young's plan epitomized the principle of the *offensive*, being extremely bold and aggressive. After riding with Morgan, there is little doubt that he learned his lessons well. The idea of taking the war north to the Union's soil also reflects the principle.

The use of *mass* and *economy of force* were obvious. Given a force of less than 30 men, there are limits to what can be accomplished. By careful planning, Young carefully selected a target and the optimum moment to attack it to gain maximum impact from his small band.

Young's force employed the principle of *maneuver*, using the *maneuver* across the border to gain sanctuary. Unfortunately, the Vermonters were in no mind to observe the laws of sovereignty at that time.

It is obvious that the raiders followed the principle of *unity of command*. Young reported directly to Commissioner Clay. He established subordinate leaders, and used them effectively when dividing his unit into smaller teams. There were no problems in this area.

Obviously, since he was undetected prior to execution, Young effectively maintained security. Additionally, until his capture, he and his force maintained local security as well, choosing to depart Saint Albans when a large body of railroad workers approached. Young did not, however, allow security to become an excuse for overcompartmentation of the operation. Unlike Andrews, every member knew the purpose of the mission and his role in it. The tendency to observe operational security (OPSEC) to the point of ridiculousness was not a factor.

The operation achieved complete *surprise*. There was no indication of any suspicion in the area, or organized military activity until after the raid. Certainly, no one suspected an attack on the town, despite a similar occurrence in Maine only a few months before. The decision by Young to trust his men and inform them of the importance of *surprise* was a correct one.

The plan closely observed the principle of *simplicity*, with each man understanding his part in the mission. Given his ad hoc organization of volunteer escapees, he wisely decided not to make the plan too complicated. Even experienced, highly trained special operations forces should avoid unnecessarily complex plans with many interdependent moving parts. Young showed exceptional understanding of this principle and applied it well.

In the end, the Saint Albans raiders were partially, if not totally successful, but this was not due to a failure by their leadership. Lieutenant Young exemplified the type of special operations personnel required to conduct well-planned and executed direct action missions today. The next example will demonstrate how experienced special operations personnel may fail on a well-planned and executed mission due to security compromises.

The Attack on the USS Michigan

The Confederates mounted other operations from Canada in 1864, including one which involved the hijacking of the only Federal warship on the Great Lakes to free several thousand Confederate officers held in a prison camp in Ohio.

The USS Michigan was the first iron-hulled ship in the United States Navy. Laid down in 1843 and displacing 582 tons, this sidewheel steamer was also the Navy's first primarily steam-powered vessel. Limited by treaty to one gun, she was nevertheless the only warship on the Great Lakes. Before the operation in September 1864, the Federals prominently displayed her first as a Federal recruiting vessel, and subsequently to assist in the enforcement of the Federal Conscription Act on the increasingly dissatisfied Northern people. In the wave of violence following the act, the authorities called on the Michigan to put down draft riots in Detroit, Buffalo, and Milwaukee. Following these actions, the Navy upgraded the armament of the Michigan (in violation of the treaty) with two 12-pounder howitzers with both deck and field carriages. The Navy provided the guns with shell and grapeshot and displayed them prominently on the forecastle and promenade decks.³³

In October of 1863, authorities ordered the Michigan to Sandusky, Ohio to assist with the security of the prisoner of war camp on Johnson's Island. The following month, Secretary of War Stanton warned forces in the area of possible Confederate actions in an effort to take the war north. The Navy Department further warned the Captain, Commander John C. Carter that, "Reliable information furnished to this department that a project is on foot in Canada to fit out steamers and attempt a rescue of the prisoners confined on Johnson's Island. . . .

Rifled guns will be sent to you."³⁴ Twelve naval rifles arrived just days later.

The suspicions by the Federals were correct. Lieutenant William H. Murdaugh of the Confederate Navy had prepared a plan earlier in 1863 for that very purpose. Once they released the prisoners, the Michigan would raid commerce and attack cities on the Great Lakes. There is no doubt that this would have a serious impact on Union operations in the region, at least until the Navy could put superior vessels on the Lakes and run the Michigan to ground. The Confederate Secretary of the Navy approved the plan and detailed the former crew of the CSS Virginia to the mission, but President Jefferson Davis canceled the mission.³⁵

The Confederate losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg pointed out the paucity of Confederate military options and the plan was revived in September 1863. On 7 October 1863, twenty-two men under Lieutenant John Wilkerson, CSN left North Carolina on a blockade runner. The budget for the operation was \$35,000 in gold. The men split up and made their way separately to Montreal for a linkup on 21 October. Confederate agents were able to purchase 100 revolvers and two nine-pounder cannons. Of the 180 known Confederate escapees contacted in Montreal, 32 agreed to serve on the mission.³⁶

Meanwhile, they alerted the prisoners on Johnson's Island to be prepared for the rescue. This was most likely when the Federals first learned of the attempt as well. Agents placed the message in code in the personals section of The New York Herald.

The plan was to commandeer a commercial steamer to ram the Michigan, after which they would board and take her. Once they secured the ship, the raiders would fire a shot through the Union officers' quarters on the island.

The plan had progressed to the point of buying tickets on the target steamer when the Canadian government tipped off the Federals. Obviously, this was a further compromise to the plan from another source. At this point, they canceled the plan and the operatives exfiltrated back to the Confederacy.

There were no noteworthy incidents for the remainder of 1863 and into the summer of 1864, save the poor mechanical condition of the ship, which was beginning to near the end of her useful lifespan barring major overhaul.³⁷

Again, in mid-1864 the Confederate Commissioner in Canada, Jacob Thompson, embroiled with failure in the antiwar Copperhead and Sons of Liberty movements, revived the operation against the Michigan. Again, the commission selected an escapee from a Union prisoner of war camp for the mission. Captain Charles H. Cole was the mission planner for this, the third attempt. Captain Cole had been a member of both John Hunt Morgan and Nathan Bedford Forrest's commands before his capture. Cole met up with John Y. Beall, Captain Thomas H. Hines, and Lieutenant Bennett Young to plan the mission in detail. Beall was a solid performer--before receiving a medical discharge from the Army for wounds, he had been a member of the Stonewall Brigade and then served under Turner Ashby. Hines had masterminded the escape of John Morgan and his officers from a Union prison camp. Cole, Beall, and Young conducted a two-week reconnaissance of the USS Michigan and her berthing area. The report from Cole to Thompson was extraordinary in its detail and clarity. This report would be considered an outstanding target analysis today. It included a local reconnaissance, with intelligence reports of individuals and potential for compromise, and of Captain Carter himself.

In the September 1864 iteration of the plan, Cole would act as a trusted agent, infiltrating the Michigan and attempting to disable the officers via a wild party. The steamer, under Acting Master John Y. Beall, would not ram the Michigan but would board her after the officers were incapacitated. Other than this detail, the plans for the capture of the USS Michigan were the same. After the capture, the vessels would steam with the prisoners to the harbor of Sandusky, commandeer the Federal arsenal and would "form the nucleus of an army, which could be used for greater things."³⁸ During the mission briefback, one Godfrey J. Hyams, a new associate of Commissioner Thompson was present.

Cole successfully infiltrated Ohio and ingratiated himself with the Michigan's officers. This was possible in no small part due to the advance he had received from Thompson of \$60,000. He proceeded to live out his cover story as a wealthy oil speculator from Pennsylvania, come to set up a new oil company. Cole operated out of a local hotel, where he entertained Captain Carter and the officers of the Michigan. Carter repeatedly invited Cole to spend an evening on the Michigan. Eventually, Captain Carter introduced Cole to the commander of the Johnson's Island prison. Cole cultivated his friendship with the camp commander, and would spend mornings on the Michigan, and in the afternoons would visit the prison camp. Eventually, the authorities permitted Cole to "lecture" the Confederate prisoners and give them cigars. In fact, the cigars contained messages on small scraps of paper. Cole was also busy with local members of the Copperhead society.

On 17 September 1864, Lieutenant Colonel B. H. Hill, the assistant provost marshal of Michigan again received a warning of the planned hijacking of the Michigan from a man identifying himself as a former Confederate soldier living in Canada. This man was Godfrey Hyams.³⁹ The provost marshal informed the captain of the Michigan, and

together they planned to trap the hijackers. The following evening, Hyams again appeared and told Colonel Hill that he had been present at the mission briefing, and that a man named Cole was planning to drug the Michigan's officers. He immediately telegraphed this news to Captain Carter.⁴⁰

Meanwhile the caterers were setting up a dinner on the Michigan, paid for by Mr. Cole. He had, of course, drugged the champagne. Cole had also dispatched a message to the local Copperhead society, directing their attack on the outside of the prison when the inmates rioted. Unknown to Captain Carter, Cole had bought off his engineering officer, who had temporarily sabotaged the ship's engines.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Beall was efficiently carrying out his part of the plan. Twenty-nine Confederates, including John Beall, boarded the steamer Philo Parsons at various stops along her route on 18 and 19 September 1864. One of the groups of men boarded with a steamer trunk containing the weapons to be used in the operation.⁴²

What they did not know at this time was that the provost marshal had Cole arrested and clapped in irons shortly after 2:00 A.M. on the nineteenth. There would be no signal because Cole was in custody. Cole made admissions and implicated another conspirator but refused to sign a confession. They charged him with twelve counts of treason. Meanwhile Captain Carter prepared a reception for the raiders, standing extra watches, manning guns, and issuing arms to repel boarders.⁴³

Shortly after noon on the twentieth, the men on the Philo Parsons opened the chest, armed themselves, and proceeded to hijack the ship. The ship steamed to a linkup point where Cole was to have sent a message detailing his success and further directions, but they received no word. Shortly thereafter, in need of fuel, the Philo Parsons heaved

to off Middle Bass Island to take on wood. The Island Queen, another commercial steamer, pulled up alongside. Beall could take no chances. Despite the Federal soldiers standing on her deck, the Confederates went over the side. After a brief fight, the Island Queen was theirs as well. Without sufficient men available to take prisoners, Beall put the Federals and passengers ashore on Middle Bass Island (paroling the soldiers) and scuttled the Island Queen. Not knowing the status of Cole and the Michigan, the Philo Parsons steamed about waiting. Most of Beall's men refused to attack the USS Michigan without the signal, a wise decision given the circumstances. Nevertheless, Beall had them sign a document attesting to their cowardice.⁴⁴

After the attack failed to materialize on the night of 19 and 20 September 1864, Captain Carter planned to steam out after the raiders. Unfortunately, he received a message from the Navy directing him to remain and help secure the prison. Later on the twentieth, they permitted the Michigan to pursue, but by this time, the Philo Parsons was gone.

Beall and the Philo Parsons steamed back up the Detroit River to Canada, stopping at Fighting Island just long enough to put ashore the remaining crew of the Philo Parsons. They then steamed to Sandwich, Canada and around 8:00 A.M. ransacked, and scuttled the vessel at the dock. The Canadian authorities arrived after all but two Confederates had departed.⁴⁵

Steaming north, that morning, the USS Michigan did recover the marooned passengers from Middle Bass Island. On the basis of reports he received, Captain Carter steamed to the mouth of the Detroit River, but not wanting to violate Canadian waters, opted not to enter. Captain Carter was unaware that this was only hours after the raiders scuttled the Philo Parsons. The Michigan put out again on the twenty-first in

search of the Philo Parsons. When the lookout aloft shouted that the Philo Parsons was in sight, Captain Carter went to general quarters, had his guns loaded and fired a round across the bow of his target. It was the Philo Parsons. The boarding party found no Confederates. It had taken the owner less than 24 hours to refloat her and put the steamer back in service.⁴⁶

On 22 September, as Captain Carter was putting his two prisoners ashore at Sandusky, a sudden gust of wind blew the roof off the Johnson's Island officers' quarters. The prisoners, thinking this was the signal, began an unsuccessful and all too brief escape attempt.⁴⁷

This direct action operation was a failure. While there was an excellent opportunity for a small force operating on the Great Lakes to divert both Federal Army and Navy forces, only a limited number of vessels and a few troops were diverted. As for the primary plan to free thousands of prisoners and terrorize the area, it was a total failure. Again, as there were few Confederate forces involved, and most were former prisoners of war, this could have been an excellent mission. The actions by the principals Captain Cole and Acting Master Beall were exemplary. The failure in this case was due to security leaks. The plan was both bold and audacious; however, it had been attempted at least twice before. Due to this repetition, the element of surprise was marginal at best. Given the security breach, the mission was impossible. The fact that the authorities apprehended only Cole and three others was the best outcome possible after the betrayal of the mission. If Beall's men had not refused to go through with the attack, they probably would have been sitting ducks for the USS Michigan's alert and ready crew. One excellent touch was the thorough planning and detailed reconnaissance. Again, the importance of preparation is just

as relevant now as it was in 1864. The leaders on the mission were not at fault. The presence of Hyams at the briefback was unnecessary and compromised the mission. Access rosters should be maintained and isolation procedures followed. Finally, the leaders were operating on the margin of their capability. The limitations of a small steamer with no guns and a small boarding party against a warship with fourteen guns should be obvious. Even the success of the plan with all officers incapacitated and the engines sabotaged is questionable. To attempt such a plan for the third time approached folly.

The objectives of the mission were clear to Cole, Beall, and their men. There were military, political, economic, and psychological objectives. The key to all the objectives of freeing prisoners, shelling towns, and raiding commerce was the seizure of the USS Michigan. Failing this key task meant total mission failure. Again, a diversion of Federal Army and Navy forces north to respond to the threat would assist the conventional Confederate forces and possibly loosen the blockade. Politically, the capture of a major vessel, liberation and arming of several thousand prisoners, attacks on towns in the industrial heartland and loss of control of the Great Lakes could have changed the outcome of the war. Furthermore, the political impact of a successful attack in 1864 could have influenced the outcome of the Union elections. The economic impact of loss of productivity and shipping on the Great Lakes would have been tremendous. Psychologically, the impact of these losses on the people of the North, especially before the election, could have been critical. The psychological boost of this raid could have been enormous to the people of the South.

This operation was very bold and aggressive, perhaps excessively given the first two failed attempts. The seizure of the Michigan was highly unlikely, but not impossible. Unfortunately, the

operation was compromised, which prevented the success of a critical subtask, the disabling of the Michigan's officers. This failure made further progress of the mission foolhardy and impossible, regardless of boldness. After riding with Forrest and Morgan, there is no doubt that Captain Cole absorbed his lessons well. Beall's actions also reflect credibly upon his offense-oriented former commanders, who were Stonewall Jackson and Ashby Turner.

The use of *mass* and *economy of force* were good. Again, there are limits to what a force of less than thirty men can accomplish. Careful planning and a thorough reconnaissance removed any foreseeable obstacles from the operation. Cole selected the target and the optimum moment to attack for maximum impact. The possession of the USS Michigan would permit a few men to free many more, who would require a very large Federal force to recapture. Furthermore, at the hands of a small Confederate force the Federal government would suffer a tremendous loss of face at a critical juncture in history which would be difficult to overcome. This mission was potentially capable of significantly influencing the outcome of the war.

Since the action took place on board naval vessels, the principle of *maneuver* was a given. The mission to seize the Philo Parsons and to use it for infiltration and exfiltration was well planned and executed. Obviously, ships offer a better opportunity for *maneuver* than railroads. The plan allowed for the mission to be aborted and prepared for the escape and evasion of the force, if necessary.

The raiders followed the principle of *unity of command*, although Beall's men refused to continue with the mission when it appeared hopeless. Cole reported directly to Commissioner Thompson. Beall was detailed to Cole, although he was technically assigned to Thompson.

Since the mission was compromised, *security* was a failure. Cole failed to effectively maintain *security*. Someone should have challenged the presence of Hyams at the briefback, even if he was an associate of the Commissioner. While Cole had a cover, it was very high profile and extravagant. While it did work, it also gave him high exposure and visibility, a serious problem if the authorities had been seeking a man of his description. Overcompartmentation of *security* was not a problem on this mission. Every participant knew the purpose of the mission and his role in it, as did one too many nonparticipants. The failure to observe OPSEC was the downfall of this mission.

The initial phases of the operation achieved complete *surprise*. There was no indication of any suspicion in the taking of the Philo Parsons. The authorities knew that the USS Michigan was a target, and raiders had attempted to capture it twice before. Achieving *surprise* in the actual attack on the USS Michigan would have been exceedingly difficult, even if Cole's plan to drug the officers had succeeded. After the alert, a surface attack could not have achieved *surprise*.

The plan did not closely observe the principle of *simplicity*. The plan was very complicated and contained a large number of choke points. Given the requirement for the coordinated activity of several parties to seize the USS Michigan, then the complicated operation to free the prisoners, the plan was not likely to succeed. This plan required the success of too many independent components.

The Attack on City Point

On 11 August 1864, an ordnance barge moored at the Army of the Potomac's massive supply center at City Point, Virginia exploded, killing 43 men, wounding 126, destroying two ships, 600 feet of warehouse, 180 linear feet of wharf, tons of munitions and causing two

million dollars worth of property damage.⁴⁸ The ordnance barge detonated with over twenty thousand rounds of artillery ammunition and more than 75,000 rounds of small arms ammunition on board. Secondary missiles, fragmentation, and exploding ordnance rained down over several miles of Union encampments. The Army commander, General Ulysses S. Grant was sitting under a tent with his staff only a few hundred yards away. Under the awning of the General's tent, the explosion wounded his aide as well as several orderlies and killing one orderly along with several horses. General Grant was unhurt.⁴⁹ The local lemonade vendor was not so lucky. A saddle launched from the barge moored next to the ordnance boat struck him in the head and killed him.⁵⁰

Typically, the blame for the explosion fell upon the depot ordnance officer, First Lieutenant (Brevet Captain) Morris Schaff, with the investigation centered on his ammunition storage and handling procedures and safety policies. Eventually, the investigation absolved Lieutenant Schaff of all responsibility in the accident. This did not keep him from receiving transfer orders to a minor job as an inspector of cannon and projectiles three days after the explosion and four days before the inquiry convened. Strangely, while clearing his multi-million dollar property book, all missing items were found to have been stored in the barge or wharf warehouse and destroyed in the blast⁵¹

Not until June of 1865, after the war had ended did the Federals discover that the accident was the work of a "horological torpedo" or time bomb placed by agents John Maxwell and R. K. Dillard of the Confederate Secret Service. General Harry W. Halleck immediately ordered their arrest.⁵²

The Confederate Secret Service and The Torpedo Bureau were Headquarters for Confederate saboteurs and secret agents. Functioning as a command and control headquarters, much along the lines of the

modern United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) with operational authority, the Secret Service was the point of contact for all Confederate national level covert and clandestine special operations activities. Additional responsibilities included intelligence gathering and special weapons development. Until the Civil War, no one had thought to combine a clockwork mechanism and a detonator to an explosive charge. Working under Brigadier General G. J. Rains, Captain Zedekiah McDaniel was one of the first to develop such a device, and had already been involved in the mining of the U.S. gunboat Cairo in December of 1862. On 29 February 1864, Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon authorized McDaniel to "enlist a company of men, not to exceed fifty in number, for secret service against the enemy, under the regulations prescribed by the Department for such organizations."⁵³ Apparently, McDaniel had little difficulty raising his company, and among the volunteers was John Maxwell.

Unfortunately, as is typical of classified units, little information about the unit and its accomplishments exists outside the after action report for the City Point operation. In the destruction of Richmond as the Federals arrived, records of this unit and its activities would likely have been among the first destroyed.

The after action report, filed by Maxwell on 16 December 1864, gives all the Confederate documentation available:

Captain, I have the honor to report that in obedience to your orders, and with the means and equipment furnished me by you, I left this city 26th of July last, for the line of the James River, to operate with the horological torpedo against the enemy's vessels navigating that river. I had with me Mr. R.K. Dillard, who was well acquainted with the localities, and whose services I engaged for the expedition. On arriving in Isle of Wight County, on the 2d of August, we learned of the immense supply of stores being landed at City Point, and for the purpose, by stratagem, of introducing our machine upon the vessels there discharging stores, started for that point. We reached there before daybreak on the 9th of August last, with a small amount of provisions, having traveled mostly by night and crawled upon our knees to pass the east picket-line. Requesting my companion to remain behind about half a mile, I approached

cautiously the wharf, with my machine and powder covered by a small box. Finding the captain had come ashore from a barge then at the wharf, I seized the occasion to hurry forward with my box. Being halted by one of the wharf sentinels I succeeded in passing him by representing that the captain had ordered me to convey the box on board. Hailing a man from the barge I put the machine in motion and gave it in his charge. He carried it aboard. The magazine [of the bomb] contained about twelve pounds of powder. Rejoining my companion, we retired to a safe distance to witness the effect of our effort. In about an hour the explosion occurred. Its effect was communicated to another barge beyond the one operated upon and to a large wharf building containing their stores (enemy's), which was totally destroyed. The scene was terrific, and the effect deafened my companion to an extent from which he has not recovered.⁵⁴

Maxwell and his local guide exfiltrated through the Union lines at City Point and continued reconnaissance operations while returning to friendly forces. General Rains sent the report along with an endorsement stating that he suspected the destruction to be the work of his men, but he could not confirm this until their return and debriefing.⁵⁵

While the attack was well executed and validated the use of new technology, it occurred so late in the war as to have little impact. This mission was a classic example of too little too late. The Union believed it to be an accident and took only limited countermeasures of detailing two infantry regiments to construct fortifications around the depot and clean up the damage.⁵⁶ Proper employment, once testing of the device was complete, would have been to build them in mass numbers, distribute them to agents across the country, and emplace them all simultaneously.

The impact, in terms of physical damage and psychological terror, especially if accomplished prior to the great Union victories of July 1863, could well have been enough to turn the tide. The abortive efforts of the Confederates trying to burn New York City could have been amplified a hundredfold by the use of a mix of incendiaries and horological torpedoes in several great cities of the North. The

resulting terror campaign against the civilian populace would have been little different from the fire and scorched earth policies of Sherman and Sheridan, which were quite effective, if somewhat brutal.

This mission by Maxwell and Dillard achieved complete success. Their infiltration was perfect. The emplacement of the device, while successful, could have been negated by the action of the sailor who took it onboard. A better, but riskier solution would have been for Maxwell to have entered the ship himself and placed the device near, if not in, the ammunition stores. The timer allowed for successful exit from the target area and subsequent exfiltration. One minor shortcoming was the failure to establish and observe a minimum safe distance, but bomb damage assessment requirements may have dictated the observation point. This was a very successful mission from a tactical standpoint, but it had little operational or strategic impact. Special operations personnel must consider the long term effects of the mission when conducting operations.

Maxwell and Dillard had a very simple *objective*, which they both understood. On a mission of only two men, if the *objective* is not critical the requirement is fairly simple. Whether Maxwell briefed Dillard on the bomb or his mission is unknown, but since Dillard was only a local guide it was not essential that he have all the details.

On this mission, there were military, political, economic and psychological *objectives*. The possibility existed that the Federals would detail increased forces to security functions at their bases, perhaps even nationwide. Any diversion of Federal forces north to security details could only help the conventional Confederate commanders trying to contend with the massive numbers of opponents.

Politically, the destruction of a large Federal facility, presumed secure, could damage the odds of the administration in the fall

elections. Destruction of a number of facilities nationwide would almost certainly have influenced the election.

The economic impact of the loss of \$2,000,000 in war material was not critical, but if the attack specifically targeted a critical type of ammunition just prior to or during a campaign it could have had far greater consequences. A bombing campaign against Federal artillery ammunition production and storage facilities could have been extremely damaging to the Union war effort. The psychological impact of a number of these bombing losses on the people of the North just before the election could have been key.

The psychological boost of this raid, had it become public knowledge, could have been significant. The results of twenty or thirty of these attacks would have had an enormous negative psychological impact against the Federal war effort.

This operation was very bold and aggressive, and yet low risk. Except for the two individuals involved, the consequences of a failure were minimal. Certainly, repeated incidents of this nature would have led to increased security and reduced probability of success. The execution of a number of them on the same night would have minimized the risk. The greatest danger posed was the possibility of loss of one of the devices, and subsequent employment of the torpedo by the Federals.

The use of *mass* and *economy of force* were superb. While two men was sufficient *mass* to undertake this operation, *mass* was not a factor. The *economy of force* aspect was huge. Two men made a large, albeit temporary, impact on the Federal forces in Virginia. Extensive planning and a solid reconnaissance, in conjunction with a technological breakthrough, were key to the success of this mission. The effects would have been significantly greater and the *economy of force* just as

impressive had ten or twenty teams made simultaneous attacks on widely dispersed targets.

Maneuver was key only during the infiltration and exfiltration. Technology permitted the emplacement of the device and exit from the area prior to the weapon's functioning. Again, *maneuver* would have been better had multiple teams attacked the Federal supply system on a widespread basis. Multiple storage points made recovery of a single loss a simple affair. Interdiction would even have been improved had Maxwell himself emplaced several of the devices throughout the facility.

The principle of *unity of command* was not an issue. The highest levels had approved the mission, and mission tasking and control was through the appropriate channels. The only shortfall was the loss of synergy of a conventional operation placing a requirement on the system for resupply of the interdicted commodity. This represented the loss of *unity of effort*. Had a Confederate offensive been conducted requiring the Federal forces to expend large quantities of ammunition, a temporary loss may have had far reaching consequences. Even a robust supply system such as the Federals' in 1864 may be subject to local shortages. An ammunition shortfall in even a few areas could have a tremendous impact. Special operations forces must recognize this potential effect and coordinate unified effort to achieve maximum results from the total force, not just local SOF success.

Security was perfect. Therein lies the beauty of a small or individual direct action sabotage mission. The target forces only became aware of the attack after the war when a captured document disclosed it. The Secret Service and Torpedo Bureau conducted a number of operations without publicity or compromise. Finally, with only the unit commander and one operator knowing about the mission, they increased operational security tremendously. Even the unit commander

did not know of the exact target or time of attack.

Overcompartmentation of security was not a problem on this mission.

The operation achieved complete surprise. As discussed, the Federals attributed the explosion to an accident and did not even suspect sabotage. The Federal forces oriented security toward a conventional threat, and Maxwell exploited this mistake. Since the Federals did not discover the true cause of the explosion until after the war, additional missions would have achieved the same surprise until the Federals finally figured out the cause.

The plan closely observed the principle of simplicity. The plan was uncomplicated and straightforward. The mission concept was deliberately vague and did not have a specific target or time for the attack. This vagueness could have been a negative if synchronization was a requirement.

This direct action mission was a complete success. In fact, this was the most successful of the four direct action missions examined. Maxwell was a highly trained and proficient operator under the control of competent leadership. A similar relationship must exist today with special operations leaders being confident in their subordinates' abilities. There are other lessons to be learned from application of modern SOF doctrine to Civil War direct action missions. We will now look at the direct action missions from the perspective of the SOF imperatives.

Direct Action Analysis

The Special Operations mission imperatives offer a somewhat different analysis than the principles of war. A review of the four selected direct action missions, when examined from the mission imperative considerations reveals additional lessons learned.

The SO imperatives are:

1. *Understand the operational environment.*
2. *Recognize political implications.*
3. *Facilitate interagency activities.*
4. *Engage the threat discriminately.*
5. *Consider long-term effects.*
6. *Ensure legitimacy and credibility of SO activities.*
7. *Anticipate and control psychological effects.*
8. *Apply capabilities indirectly.*
9. *Develop multiple options.*
10. *Ensure long-term sustainment.*
11. *Provide sufficient intelligence.*
12. *Balance security and synchronization.*⁵⁷

In his raid, Andrews understood the operational environment.

He had coordinated with and received mission approval from his superiors. Unfortunately, he changed the timing of the raid due to the rainy weather without coordinating with BG Mitchel, and seemed to have no contingency plan.

On the Saint Albans raid, Lieutenant Bennett Young clearly understood the operational environment. He realized the capabilities and limitations imposed upon his men and the mission while conducting a cross-border raid from a neutral country against a civilian target. After the pursuers captured a portion of his force, Young, who had already successfully escaped, returned to ensure their treatment was legitimate. On the raid, he was careful to observe legal restrictions, and attempted to minimize civilian casualties. His mission planning reflected clear and careful consideration of the operational environment.

Captain Cole and Acting Master Beall's actions on the Great Lakes reflect a more limited *understanding of the operational environment*. Given the fact that this was the third attempt at the same target, and that the previous two attempts had failed, this mission was at best a highly optimistic effort. The plan was complex, required close cooperation and timing, and failed due to a breach of operational security.

In the City Point Raid, Captain McDaniel and Maxwell were completely *attuned to the operational environment*. The mission was simple, low-risk and allowed the leader of the operation maximum flexibility in timing and target selection. This is only effective for a well trained, trusted force, and is particularly appropriate for direct action sabotage missions. Potential weaknesses were target analysis and selection and synchronization.

It is not certain that Andrews *recognized the political implications of the raid*. Certainly, he never expected to be executed for an act in which he injured no one and damage was minimal.

Bennett Young *understood the political implications* of the raid, but may have failed to take into account the long-term impact of his operation. He appeared to underestimate the dedication of his posse and that they would fail to heed the sovereignty of the international border with Canada.

Cole and Beall appear to have been of the same school of thought as Young. While they tried to work around Canadian neutrality, they expected the border to protect them.

At City Point, Maxwell had mission approval of senior leadership and there is no evidence that he was unprepared if the Federals reacted to the bombing. Obviously, he and his leaders *understood the political implications* of his attack. Maxwell later

appeared in the White House to ask Grant's secretary for assistance with the Patent Office, and to prove his skill as an inventor, described how he had had built the horological torpedo and conducted the raid on City Point. Unfortunately, the secretary had been an aide to the General and had conducted the official investigation of the explosion that declared it an accident. There was no record of assistance with the Patent Office.⁵⁸

Beyond the fact that Andrews and one other raider were civilians, there were no *interagency aspects* to his operation. Certainly, he could have coordinated with the Federal railroad authorities, and perhaps with a reaction force to assist him.

Both of the cross-border operations involved *interagency cooperation*, and all indications are that the coordination proceeded without incident. Coordination could have been made for legal arrangements, diplomatic cooperation, naval support, intelligence assistance, or a number of other agencies' help.

As an essentially one man mission with no target or timetable, the City Point operation required no *interagency cooperation*. Interagency coordination could have been a factor had he chosen a waterborne infiltration or had the operation been part of a large scale mission.

The Andrews raiders did *engage the threat discriminately*, since they inflicted no casualties. Andrews targeting was selective and limited collateral damage.

Lieutenant Young carefully targeted and planned to minimize exposure to civilians in the area. The raiders harmed no one until armed resistance occurred, and then used only the minimum force required. Given the publicity afforded collateral damage and casualties today, this is an important lesson to be learned.

The planners of the attack on the USS Michigan were less successful in targeting. The taking of the Philo Parsons was bloodless, and the Island Queen nearly so, but the attack on the Michigan itself and the subsequent attack on the cities would have sustained heavy casualties. The prison escape had the potential to cause a great number of friendly and enemy killed and wounded. There were better alternatives to the plan to take over the Michigan.

The Confederates intended for the City Point raid to be an *indiscriminate attack*. Time bombs are not precision instruments and the explosion missed the steamer to Baltimore, containing many civilians, by a matter of minutes. The timing of the steamer did not appear to be a mission consideration. However, since the raid was clandestine, the "accident" destroying the vessel would not have been attributable to the Confederacy and the papers would probably have blamed the Federal forces. Again, this was an advantage of a clandestine sabotage mission.

For Andrews, *long-term effects* were not a consideration. Even if he had not interdicted the bridges, they were not critical nodes for the long term destruction of the railroad. This consideration relates directly to target analysis and the requirement to accurately target nodes, inflicting destruction commensurate with the period of degradation desired.

Lieutenant Young *considered the long-term effects* of the Saint Albans raid and integrated them into the plan. The desired long-term effects were loss of confidence in the Federal government by the northernmost populace and the diversion of combat forces from conventional missions to security operations.

In the Great Lakes operation, *long-term effects* were secondary considerations. Obviously, even if the hijack of the USS Michigan was successful, the Federals could bring as many warships as required into

the Great Lakes. In this and the preceding mission, the considerations should have included an assessment of the missions' impact on the Canadians and British.

The clandestine nature of the City Point raid made *long-term considerations* less important. The Confederates only used the weapon a few times, and the Federals discovered its existence too late to be of significance. A more aggressive campaign would have required a better assessment of its long-term impact.

Obviously, Andrews knew of the problems with the *legitimacy and credibility* of his operation as he briefed the soldiers himself on the implications of espionage and wearing of civilian clothes before asking them to volunteer.

The cross-border raiders made similar considerations with their operations. The raiders were somewhat concerned about Canadian neutrality, and gave it consideration in planning and execution. The pursuers apprehended Young as he was trying to establish his soldiers' role as combatants. Young appears to have had more concerns in this area than Cole.

In the mission against City Point, *legitimacy and credibility* were not major considerations.

The *psychological effects* of the Andrews Raid, had it been successful, could have been positive for the Union and negative for the Confederacy. As the mission turned out, it worked in the opposite manner, until the Confederates executed several of the raiders.

The Saint Albans raiders provided a minor boost to the Confederate morale, and definitely caused some local anger as well as panic in Vermont. They fully *considered the psychological aspects* which were a minor plus for the Confederacy. The timing of this mission prior

to the critical Federal elections of 1864 could have boosted its impact exponentially.

The Great Lakes operation had the potential to have a much greater *psychological impact*. The liberation of 3,000 Confederate prisoners in the heartland of the North would have had a tremendous positive psychological impact on the Confederate public, and an equally negative one on the Federal public. This mission could have had its greatest success psychologically, especially before the presidential elections.

The *psychological effect* of a clandestine sabotage mission is not normally a consideration. A widespread overt sabotage campaign would have needed to consider and develop a plan to exploit the psychological effects of this mission.

Andrews did not *apply force indirectly*. If he had been thinking indirectly, he would have sought Union loyalists in the area to assist him or to accomplish the mission themselves.

The Saint Albans and Great Lakes operations did not use *indirect applications of force*, except to force the Federal government to react to the threat. Normally, direct action missions will not rely greatly upon indirect force or influence.

The City Point operation was an excellent example of *indirect application of force*. For the potential risk of one officer, the death and destruction inflicted was incredible. The destructive power of a few pounds of explosive properly positioned was in effect the equivalent of an infantry division. As mentioned, a campaign of these missions could have had a major impact on the war, even in 1864.

Andrews did not *develop multiple options*. Once the pursuers were on his heels, he seemed to lack the flexibility required and had no contingency plans. Since he failed to rehearse, he failed to identify

actions and counteractions which would have driven his contingency planning.

The Saint Albans raiders had *flexibility and exercised options*. Thorough reconnaissance and detailed planning, likely involving a discussion of branches and sequels, resulted in a plan which was flexible and permitted multiple options.

The Great Lakes operation had a degree of *flexibility*, particularly as executed by John Beall, but was excessively complicated and could not possibly have considered all the possible permutations once the operation began. The failure of the mission was predictable because of the number of interdependent activities.

The City Point operation had complete *flexibility*. Captain Maxwell could have terminated the mission at any point with little risk, and he had the ability to react as the situation required. The major risks were on infiltration, emplacement, and exfiltration. He could easily modify his plan and adapt as the situation developed, as in fact, he did.

Andrews failed to *ensure long term sustainment*. If he completed the raid successfully, he would have been unable to operate in the area again. It is not clear what his long term goals and *objectives* were, but it is unlikely that he would have been able to return to his intelligence gathering operation.

The Saint Albans raiding plan was *sustainable*. The original plan called for the group to continue with the raids as long as possible. Unless the Federal government persuaded the Canadians to take action, the raiders could have staged from across the border and operated with impunity until the Federals gathered sufficient force to catch and eliminate them. The raiders could shift to another region more quickly than the Federals, and the presence of a large number of

Federal troops on the border would have posed a visible threat to the Canadians.

The Great Lakes operation was not *sustainable*. The mission was a one time operation, and would probably have ended soon after the release of the prisoners.

The sabotage of City Point was easily *sustainable*. With a minimum of personnel and equipment limited to the horological torpedoes, this was an ideal mission for the personnel and resource strapped Confederacy. The unit could have continued with these missions for some time, unless the frequency and pattern tipped off the Federals. At that point, the plan would have been riskier but sustainable.

Andrews had been working on his plan for some time. He had made a previous attempt, which should have sufficed as a rehearsal, with lessons learned. He had excellent *intelligence* to accomplish his mission, such as schedules, maps, etc. His only shortfall in this area was his lack of intelligence as to his pursuit, which was unanticipated.

The Saint Albans raiders, under Bennett Young, had superb *intelligence* as a result of his thorough personal reconnaissance of the town. Young knew when the town was likely to be relatively empty, the location of security forces, their reaction times, and the ideal targets. This *intelligence* permitted them to execute the plan quickly with a minimum of resistance and maximum gains.

The Great Lakes planners had quite a bit of *intelligence*, most gathered during the target analysis and area study. Cole gained more information on his reconnaissance. The failure with this mission was not due to a shortfall of *intelligence*, but rather a lack of counterintelligence.

The City Point operation had a limited but adequate amount of intelligence. With the flexibility Maxwell had to strike when and where he wished, he required little intelligence support. He used a local guide to a target rich environment, and took advantage of it with a little improvisation.

Obviously, Andrews failed to *balance security and synchronization*. Though his synchronization requirements were minimal, he was overcompartmented in his operational *security* requirements and made his weather delay without coordinating with the conventional force commander. His excessive *security* may have kept him from providing a better mission brief to his men, failure to rehearse, and lack of flexibility in his planning.

Lieutenant Young did an excellent job of determining his *security and synchronization* requirements. Everyone knew their roles in the mission, the infil plan, cover story, and exfil plan. He correctly determined who was trustworthy and told them everything they needed to know. Had he been killed, his men had the commander's intent and the knowledge to proceed with the mission without him. This was an excellent example of the need to balance these factors. This need is particularly relevant today, as one of the major contributing factors (if not the primary one) in the Desert One fiasco was the failure to *balance security and synchronization*.

The preceding analysis identifies major successes and deficiencies in the Andrews' Raid, the Saint Albans Raid, the Great Lakes Operation, and the bombing of City Point. Quite possibly, a Special Forces operational detachment "Alpha" (SFOD-A) could receive such missions today (and with our superior doctrine and training successfully accomplish the mission). However, the factors most damaging in the two failures were lack of options and flexibility,

development of an unnecessarily complex plan relying upon uncontrollable events, and the failure to balance security with synchronization. These lessons are just as timeless today, and must be addressed thoroughly. Special operations leaders frequently make the same sort of mistakes today. On the two successful missions, the leaders developed flexible plans with multiple options, conducted personal reconnaissances, and developed simple, well thought-out plans, and considered the overall "big picture" before conducting the operation. These factors are just as critical to the success of the missions today as in 1864. If special operations personnel today can find historical parallels and analyze their own missions with an eye to past successes and failures, how can they fail?

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 4

UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

Two days before the allied invasion of the Philippines in January of 1945, Colonel Russell Volckmann initiated his own offensive against the Japanese. Colonel Volckmann had spent more than two years organizing and training a guerrilla army in Japanese-occupied northern Luzon. He had set up six districts, each with its own commander and military and civilian organizations including an auxiliary and underground, commanding a force of over 20,000 men. When the U.S. Sixth Army landed, Volckmann reported with five regiments of indigenous soldiers, and they fought as an integral part of the Sixth Army for the next five months, until the Japanese were eliminated.¹

In June of 1944, allied resistance forces in occupied Europe conducted a massive wave of sabotage and guerrilla warfare in support of the coming allied invasion. These resistance operations interdicted German C3I and transportation networks across Europe, disrupted German reinforcement of Normandy and tied down large numbers of German troops in stabilization and counterinsurgency operations. The guerrilla offensive was conducted largely without allied support but was tremendously successful. General Eisenhower stated that the impact of the resistance movement was the equivalent of fifteen infantry divisions.²

In Vietnam as well, American special forces personnel trained and led Montagnard tribesmen against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in

their areas in a vicious unconventional guerrilla and counter-guerrilla war.

These missions were classic modern unconventional warfare guerrilla operations. As defined in chapter 1, unconventional warfare consists of:

A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed to varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility covert or clandestine operations...."³

In chapter 2, Civil War guerrillas and units were discussed, and their activities were defined in accordance with modern doctrine. For the purpose of this thesis, "partisan ranger" organizations will be those sanctioned by the Confederate government and insurgents are conducting local resistance operating within the laws of warfare established by Dr. Lieber as guerrillas. These units will be conducting military operations independent of a conventional chain of command in a definable area of operations to which they are indigenous. Organizations meeting these requirements will be considered guerrillas in both the classic and modern terms. In this analysis, three classic examples of guerrilla warfare operations will be presented which meet the above definitions and restrictions.

Noted Civil War author Bruce Catton stated that, "Almost certainly, guerrilla warfare prolonged the war in the Eastern Theater by eight or nine months."⁴ Obviously, unconventional warfare, when properly employed, can be a tremendous combat multiplier. While the American role in unconventional warfare today is typically as an advisor and trainer, rather than as an active participant, the lesson is no less valuable.

Did the Civil War practitioners of guerrilla war such as Mosby, McNeill and "Stovepipe" Johnson leave a legacy of historical lessons

with applicability for their successors? An examination of a few of the unconventional warfare guerrilla operations may reveal some of the lessons to be learned from over 130 years ago with important considerations for today's special operations forces.

Three Civil War UW operations will be examined for lessons learned. First, will be the raid on Newburg, Indiana, by "Stovepipe" Johnson in July 1862. Then, an analysis will be conducted of the famous Fairfax Court House Raid by John S. Mosby and his Partisan Rangers in March of 1863. The finally case study will be the raid on Cumberland, Maryland of February 1865 conducted by Jesse McNeill.

The Newburg Raid

On 18 July 1862, a force under Adam Rankin Johnson crossed the Green River near Newburg, Ohio, and captured the Federal arsenal and garrison, taking 520 muskets, 400 pistols, 150 sabers, and assorted stores and 180 prisoners, which he paroled. His force consisted of thirty-five men.⁵

Sent north into Kentucky by Major General John C. Breckenridge (CSA) to deliver a coded verbal message and recruit members, Johnson and his partner, Robert M. Martin, began their mission inauspiciously enough. After recruiting only one member, he began a series of offensive operations against much larger forces, increasing his numbers to thirty. On 17 July, with a force of thirty-five men, Johnson led his men north toward the Ohio. The following morning, in broad daylight, he divided his force, taking two men with him across the Ohio River and occupied the Federal Arsenal. Martin, along with twenty-four men, crossed above Newburg as a diversion, as well as to be in position to reinforce Johnson. If Martin met resistance, Johnson and his party were to set fire to the houses around the arsenal as a diversion. After link up, the groups were to transport the weapons back across the Ohio in

captured skiffs while a group in the arsenal covered their withdrawal. These men would then torch the arsenal and cross the river. The keys to this operation were speed, audacity and surprise, since a large Federal force was only a few miles away. To improve his odds, Johnson had his men dismount two pairs of wagon wheels and mounted two sections of stovepipe on one, and a charred log on the other, creating the appearance of two cannons. The "cannon," along with Martin's party, were to demonstrate on the Kentucky side of the river opposite Newburg. This operation earned him the nickname of "Stovepipe" Johnson.

When Johnson briefed Martin of this plan, he had some understandable trepidation. Martin embraced it wholeheartedly. Johnson then briefed his little detachment of 35 men and asked for volunteers. "The entire force 'as one man' stepped forward."⁷

Upon execution, part one of the plan went flawlessly. Johnson crossed the river and occupied the unguarded arsenal. When he saw a number of townspeople running excitedly for the local hotel, Johnson decided to go over and assuage their worries. As he approached, he noted a number of weapons trained on him. Boldly, he marched into the hotel lobby and demanded the men put down their weapons or his soldiers would fire. As Martin's force was approaching, a Federal officer burst into the hotel demanded an explanation. Finding Johnson brandishing a shotgun, the officer surrendered his command, including the nearby Federal army hospital.

As Johnson loaded the captured weapons into wagons to cross the river, he discovered that the local militia was mustering. Walking up to the colonel commanding the militia, Johnson advised him to stand down and pointed out his force across the river. Johnson directed the colonel to use his field glasses to observe the "artillery" on the far bank and informed him "if I am hindered or fired on, I'll shell this

town to the ground."⁸ Upon viewing the "cannons," the colonel stood his men down and Johnson with his two men and the booty crossed back over the river.

The guerrillas crossed the Ohio, but while fording the Green River, a Federal gunboat approached, accompanied by a troop transport. Reacting quickly, Johnson and three men returned to the riverbank and set up an ambush. Two Federal soldiers were wounded when Johnson initiated the attack. The troop transport withdrew for the cover of the gunboat. While Johnson and his men withdrew, the gunboat shelled the treeline to no effect. "Stovepipe" and his men escaped without further incident and the first "invasion" of the North was complete.⁹

This mission was a classic guerrilla warfare mission. Given this small force and the improbable assignment of taking a town with a government arsenal guarded by over one hundred men, this would be an excellent solution. While plans this bold frequently fall apart under enemy contact, Johnson was sufficiently resourceful to accomplish this mission and react to the changing situation without missing a beat. In contrast to many failed guerrilla missions, sometimes the plan actually works.

The raid on Newburg, Indiana by Adam R. Johnson was an excellent example of a well-planned, well-executed, guerrilla raid. While not overlooking the role of simple good fortune, Johnson reacted quickly to respond to unforeseen problems and was extremely flexible in his responses. This mission was an unqualified success, and Johnson continued to conduct operations in this manner, rising to the rank of Brigadier General. He transitioned from a small unit guerrilla leader to command of a conventional brigade of cavalry. He took his brigade north with General John Morgan on the famous Ohio raid and avoided capture when Morgan was caught. Unfortunately, he was accidentally shot

by his own men in a heavy fog and permanently blinded in August of 1864.¹⁰ He survived to become a prominent post-war figure in Texas and lived to a ripe old age.

In keeping with the SOF application of the principles of war, Johnson clearly understood his *objective*. Given the mission to recruit, Johnson extended his mission to offensive action and prosecuted it beyond all doubts. The seizure of the arsenal and attack on Federal territory was not in his mission guidance, but realizing the impact of such an operation, and the multi-faceted nature of guerrilla war, he seized the opportunity and accomplished his *objective*.

His plan demonstrated the principle of the *offensive*, being extremely bold and aggressive. He had already discovered the value of this sort of action on previous operations, and possessed an abundance of self-confidence.

"Stovepipe" clearly followed the principles of *mass* and *economy of force*, as demonstrated by his dummy artillery. It is hard to conceive doing anything more with any fewer resources. He focused a sufficient number of troops at the critical points of the operation to accomplish his mission, and the deception plan that supported it. The *economy of force* aspect of this mission also included the numerous Federal troops that would be required to secure the border areas after this raid.

Johnson's force employed *maneuver* well, appearing hundreds of miles from the nearest known Confederate unit. Once he initiated his attack, he had a clear exfiltration plan for the withdrawal and their spoils. Finally, when confronted by a superior force, Johnson maneuvered to flank the troop transport and aggressively seize the initiative.

The principle of *unity of command* was followed. While it is not known if Johnson conducted rehearsals, he synchronized his actions, despite physical separation. All members of his party knew the plan, or at least the concept of it, and they improvised upon the remainder.

While Johnson maintained *security*, no overcompartmentation occurred, and no breaches of *security* occurred. When required, his force reacted to threats and defused them. No Federal force was prepared for an attack in this secure area, an indicator that his *security* was perfect.

The operation achieved total *surprise*. This was the result of the *security* success. The Federals were not prepared and uninformed, and were thus surprised when their *security* proved faulty. No one knew of any enemy activity in the area, certainly not a threat to the Federal forces and facilities.

The plan observed the principle of *simplicity*, with each man understanding his mission. Considering that the members of his unit were new, everyone had a simple task, and executed it to the best of their abilities.

The "Stovepipe" Johnson raid was a superb lesson for the small unit operator, such as Special Forces, of what may be accomplished with a bold and audacious plan for an indigenous force that has been well prepared. Flexibility, improvisation, and deception saved Johnson and his detachment, where failure to do so spelled disaster for other guerrillas. The raid on Newburg is a classic "how to" operation to be studied by modern special operators, much as our next example, a near perfect "snatch" mission by John S. Mosby and his Partisan Rangers.

Mosby's Fairfax Court House Raid

Arguably the greatest Confederate guerrilla leader, and certainly the most famous, was John S. Mosby. In March of 1863, he successfully completed his most successful mission, the raid on Fairfax Court House. The intent of this raid was to redress a grievance between Mosby and a Federal officer. The result was somewhat different.

Mosby's guerrilla warfare operational area (GWOA) consisted of Loudoun County, Virginia and the surrounding counties. This placed his activities dangerously close to Washington, DC and attracted the attention of several security forces stationed in the area. The extension of the capital's security zone 25 miles into Virginia created a target-rich environment for Mosby's guerrilla operations. Federal forces in the area centered on Fairfax Court House, seven miles within the security zone. Available forces in the immediate area included the 2nd Vermont Infantry Brigade (3,900 men) under Brigadier General Edwin H. Stoughton, the 3rd Brigade of Casey's Division (3,200 men), the Cavalry Brigade (2,700 men) of Colonel Percy Wyndham, and two additional infantry regiments camped within 100 yards of Fairfax Court House.¹¹

Lieutenant Mosby and his men were indigenous to the area and knew the land and people quite well. A number of the prominent local citizens were members of his auxiliary or underground and regularly reported details of Federal activity and dispositions. Mosby and his partisans probed the Federal defenses almost nightly, taking pickets and outposts prisoners, maintaining an excellent situation map and tactical intelligence flow. One of these raids netted a Sergeant Ames from Wyndham's Cavalry, who defected to Mosby and joined his partisan rangers.

The commander of the Cavalry Brigade was Colonel Percy Wyndham, an Englishman by birth. He had suffered depredations from Mosby's

frequent operations in his area since late January, and had taken it personally. After Mosby's partisans captured nine men in one evening, Wyndham personally led two hundred men in pursuit. Mosby and seven of his men charged the rear of Wyndham's column, killing one Federal and capturing three others, and challenged Wyndham to come back for more. Wyndham obliged and captured three of Mosby's party. This made it a personal matter for Mosby. In the following thirty days, Mosby, with fewer than thirty men, hit and ran, carefully choosing targets and avoiding traps. Wyndham was embarrassed and when the Washington papers began to print articles about the raids, he labeled Mosby and his rangers horse thieves. This did little to defuse the situation, as did a subsequent cavalry operation where Wyndham's men rode into Middleburg, harassed the locals and threatened to burn the town.

In the midst of this hotbed of partisan activity, Wyndham and General Stoughton added no additional security forces, took no further security measures or even established a challenge and password. In fact, General Stoughton, who was quite the socialite, decided to entertain and invited guests to a little soiree to be held on the evening of 8 March.

Mosby had been planning a raid to get Wyndham since February, and had received mission approval from his commander, General J.E.B. Stuart. On 3 March, the final planning began. Mosby's intent was to catch Wyndham, capture horses, and destroy supplies and equipment. Mosby initially planned the raid for 7 March. The plan was to infiltrate at night by riding through the Federal picket lines at a gap. He planned to hit the Fairfax Court House, accomplish his three objectives silently without firing or alerting the guard, and exfiltrate back to his secure area all in the same evening. One of his principles

for the operation was that "safety was in the audacity of the enterprise."¹²

Recovery of prisoners from a previous mission forced a twenty-four hour delay, and on the evening of 8 March, Mosby launched his mission with twenty-nine rangers. The weather was miserable, with rain, slush, and mist limiting visibility and counter reconnaissance operations. He planned to ride the twenty-five miles to Fairfax Courthouse by midnight. Mosby briefed none of his men on the mission prior to departure.¹³

The partisans started late and in the dense forest, the patrol soon had a break in contact, losing another hour. When Mosby and his men approached the Federal picket line, he briefed his subordinate leaders on the operation. Sergeant "Big Yankee" Ames, the Federal defector, led the force through a gap in the Federal lines and the patrol took on the guise of a Federal cavalry patrol. He responded to all challenges with "Fifth New York," and the patrol passed unimpeded.¹⁴ In order to make up time, the rangers took to the turnpike and cut telegraph lines as they rode. Exiting the turnpike only a mile and a half from town to bypass Federal units, they halted just outside the village, where Mosby briefed the entire force on the mission. At 2:00 A.M., they entered Fairfax Court House from the south.¹⁵

General Stoughton's party had concluded about 1:00 A.M., and the guests retired in various states of intoxication. Sergeant Ames, late of the 5th New York, acted as point element for Mosby's operation, bluffing his way past the limited interior security by posing as a member of his old unit. At this point, Mosby split his unit up and designated teams for the various objectives. The main body, under Mosby, moved toward what they believed to be Colonel Wyndham's quarters, gathering horses as they went. Other groups raided the stables and

officers' quarters, taking prisoners. The rangers quickly captured both the telegraph and operator. When Mosby discovered that he was at the wrong house, he dispatched Sergeant Ames to go to the Thomas house after Colonel Wyndham. A quick interrogation of the telegraph operator revealed General Stoughton's presence. Lieutenant Mosby left with four men to pay his respects to the general.

Ames found that Wyndham had gone to Washington, however, he did capture the staff, horses, and personal items of the colonel, as well as his former company commander from the 5th New York.

Mosby went to the house of General Stoughton, bluffed his way in, and found the general passed out in bed. The ensuing turn of events was quite comical:

"I just pulled up his shirt and gave him a spank. Its effect was electric. The brigadier rose from his pillow and in an authoritative tone inquired the meaning of this rude intrusion. I leaned over and said to him: "General, did you ever hear of Mosby?" "Yes," he quickly answered, "have you caught him?" "No," I said, "I am Mosby -- he has caught you. In order to deprive him of all hope, I told him that Stuart's Cavalry held the town and that General Jackson was at Centreville."

The general quickly dressed and was taken to the designated assembly point. There Mosby discovered over 100 prisoners and horses already assembled there. Ames reported the failure to capture Wyndham, but Mosby was satisfied with his catch.

Realizing the hour was late and time short, the band of partisans quickly formed up and rode south out of town to confuse pursuers. On the edge of town, Lieutenant Colonel Johnstone, the camp commander shouted at the group from the window of a house, demanding an explanation. When Mosby's men attempted to bring him along to explain,

the colonel opted for discretion and fled, naked, leaving his wife to fight a delaying action. A search failed to reveal his whereabouts, so the rangers departed with his uniform, not realizing that he was hiding underneath the outhouse. Later, when Colonel Johnstone tried to reenter the house, his wife delayed him as well, and insisted that he take a bath first. Mosby's time on target was just over one hour.¹⁷

At 3:30 A.M., the provost marshal, Lieutenant L. L. O'Connor telegraphed Washington:

Captain Mosby, with his command, entered this town this morning at 2:00 A.M. They captured my patrols, horses, etc. They took Brigadier-General Stoughton and horses, and his men detached from his brigade. They took every horse that could be found, public and private, and the commanding officer of this post, Colonel Johnstone, of the 5th New York Cavalry, made his escape from them in a nude state by accident. They searched for me in every direction, but being on the Vienna road, visiting outposts, I made my escape.

P.S. - All our available cavalry forces are in pursuit of them.¹⁸

Riding south only half a mile, the column turned west to pick up the Warrenton Turnpike. The rangers again used the turnpike to make up lost time. As they passed the Federal fortifications around Centreville, a few prisoners decided to make a break for the friendly lines and a ranger fired a shot, but they quickly recovered the prisoners and the Federal sentinels did nothing. The rangers soon came to the Cub Run, a normally placid stream swollen by rain and melting snow. Mosby plunged in and swam his horse across, and the rest of his party did the same, with more or less success. During the exfiltration, Mosby frequently rode ahead of his unit to scout or behind as rear guard. The sun rose just as his men left the Federal lines near Groveton. The partisans and their captives rode to Warrenton, where they spent the night. The following day, they continued on the turnpike to Culpepper Court House, where they turned the general, two captains,

Lieutenant Mosby followed the principles of *mass* and *economy of force*. Again, he even used the comment about General Stuart and Jackson to enhance the enemy perception of his limited troop strength and reduce resistance. He divided his men into teams with clearly defined missions, and let them execute their missions. Mosby used former enemy personnel as part of his deception plan and to defeat enemy security measures.

Mosby's force rode over 50 miles in one night, in enemy territory, and under bad weather conditions. Mosby's rangers bypassed and bluffed their way around enemy forces whenever possible, and outmaneuvered their pursuers to exfiltrate.

Obviously, John S. Mosby followed the principle of *unity of command*. He was the mission commander, but for key tasks, he designated key subordinate leaders and gave them the flexibility to accomplish their missions. At the appropriate time, Mosby briefed selected members and eventually, as required, all of the members of his party on the details of the plan. He operated with centralized command and decentralized execution, even in a small party of less than thirty men. His commander's intent was clearly understood. His chain of command to J.E.B. Stuart was direct, even though Fitz Lee did not like it and attempted to dissolve his unit.

A key aspect of Mosby's operation at Fairfax Court House was *security*. There were no breaches of *security*, and he waited until the appropriate time to brief subordinates. While we would discourage this today, Mosby had organized his unit less than two months earlier, and at this point he was likely unsure of the reliability of all his personnel. On the other hand, prior to execution time Mosby's rangers all understood the details of the mission, and their individual roles, so overcompartmentation was not actually a problem.

Clearly, this operation achieved total *surprise*. In fact, Mosby relied on the element of *surprise* to overcome his tremendous numerical disadvantage. Pickets and security forces were unalerted, except for those captured. While some few such as Colonel Johnstone were aware the operation was underway, none were in a position to do anything about it until the mission was successfully completed.

The principle of *simplicity* was observed and each man except for Mosby himself had a simple part in the mission. The plan did not hinge on a number of unrelated activities being completed in sequence for the plan to work. Mosby assumed risk in asking recent convert "Big Yankee" Ames to help them bluff their way past guards, but his trust was proven well placed.

This mission was well-planned and executed by men who knew their business. Mosby's flexibility, when confronted by an intelligence failure, enabled him to shift to an alternate target without pause, and successfully complete his mission. These characteristics are equally important for the special operator today. Our final unconventional warfare case study is another "snatch" mission with an even bigger target.

McNeill's Cumberland Raid

Few guerrilla commanders were as effective as Hanse McNeill and his son Jesse. Conducting missions in an area of operations in Virginia west of John Mosby's, the McNeills were dangerous men and experts in the art of the guerrilla. In 1862, when Union General Benjamin F. Kelley placed Hanse McNeill's wife and two small children in jail as hostages, he placed himself high on the list of potential guerrilla targets.

By early 1865, the guerrillas were in serious trouble. Hanse McNeill was dead and the Confederacy was on the verge of collapse.

Outspoken opponents of the guerrilla war such as General Jubal Early were vociferous in their blame of Jesse McNeill and the other local guerrillas for the recent capture of Harry Gilmore, the newly appointed area commander.²⁰ Gilmore had been dispatched to the area to establish overall control of the guerrillas and to coordinate their efforts to interdict the Federal supply lines in the area. Unfortunately, McNeill and the other guerrilla commanders in the area were resistant to the consolidation of their operations, and refused to obey Gilmore's orders. This led to his capture by Federal counterguerrilla forces in early February.

Meanwhile, Captain Jesse McNeill was temporarily out of service, confined to bed since December with a broken ankle. During the long weeks of recuperation, McNeill had ample time to ponder the wrongs done his family by the Federals, particularly General Kelley. While he recovered, he read a recent newspaper article on Kelley that had revealed various details pertaining to Kelley's lodgings, security arrangements, etc. While Hanse McNeill had contemplated a mission to get Kelley, this recuperative pause in conjunction with Kelley's media hype planted the seeds for the operation with Jesse. This mission would prove to be the most successful guerrilla raid of the war and would eclipse his rival Mosby's record haul at Fairfax Courthouse. Contemplating the mission, he discovered that Kelley's commander, Major General George Crook, commanding the Department of West Virginia was also residing in Cumberland. This was too great an opportunity to permit to pass.²¹

One of Captain McNeill's men, a Sergeant John Fay, was from Cumberland, Maryland, the headquarters of General Kelley. He had previously proposed a raid to capture Kelley to Hanse McNeill, who never got around to it. In early February, when John Lynn, another ranger

from Cumberland requested permission to go home on leave, McNeill asked him to recon the headquarters and activities of Kelley. Unfortunately, the Federals apprehended the ranger, so McNeill asked Sergeant Fay to undertake the reconnaissance mission.²²

Fay did his duty. He conducted his reconnaissance and sent word for Captain McNeill to link-up in order to conduct the operation. McNeill, who was still hobbling around on a cane, selected 63 guerrillas "with strong horses."²³ The remainder of his force was detailed to remain behind with a lieutenant to provide road guards and local security patrols. On the evening of 19 February, McNeill met up with Fay's partner Ritcher Hallar at the Hampshire County Poorhouse. In the middle of a tremendous snowstorm, Hallar informed McNeill that all conditions were optimal for the snatch mission and that Fay had remained on location at a rendezvous point to maintain contact with two local agents who were surveilling the target. The guerrillas remained overnight at the patrol base and the next day moved surreptitiously the twenty-six remaining miles to the rendezvous point, Vanse Herriot's house. There they met Sergeant Fay and finalized the plan. The rangers were briefed on the mission in detail and were offered the opportunity to quit the mission. There would be no quitters. Pre-mission checks and leaders' inspections were conducted on everything from horses to weapons. The horses in particular, were rested and fed, as they had a sixty mile trip before further care. When all was ready, they rode out to get the Federal generals.²⁴

The night was bitterly cold, and the snow was so deep that at times they had to dismount and lead their horses. They stopped once for a warming break at the farmhouse of an auxiliary member. As they forded the Potomac into Maryland, they halted at the objective rallying point, the home of another auxiliary member. There they met one of the two

agents conducting the surveillance for a final update on the situation. The agent informed them that there was not one, but two generals in Cumberland that night.²⁵

The guerrillas were five miles as the crow flies from the hotel at this point. Of the two routes available to them, the easier, less guarded route was ten miles to town. The shorter route was direct, but was heavily picketed. Due to the effects of the weather on the mission timetable, Jesse McNeill opted for the shorter route and assumed risk.²⁶

Captain McNeill quickly task organized and split his party into four groups. One party to capture each of the generals, one to take the horses from the town livery stable, and one to destroy the local telegraph office and sever communications. He also dictated the order of march, with Joe Kuykendall and himself in the lead, followed by a security force of ten men, followed by the main body. McNeill briefed his men on their responsibilities and started out for Cumberland.²⁷

Two miles en route to the target, a Federal picket challenged the guerrillas. When Jesse McNeill responded that they were a friendly patrol returning, he was told to dismount and come forward to give the password. Doubting the success of his bluff, Captain McNeill charged the picket and fired at him. The rangers charged after McNeill, and captured the guard as he stood there watching dumbfounded. The guerrillas spotted two remaining members of the picket who were loitering nearby. A quick interrogation revealed that these two Federals were Germans, who under pressure, soon revealed the challenge and password. At the next picket, Jesse put on his best German accent and bluffed his way through with the recently obtained password. Again the guerrillas captured the inattentive guards. This time, the rangers told the pickets that the town had been captured and to stand by their

post until the morning when they would be paroled. They passed a final picket post without challenge.²⁸

They rode boldly into Cumberland just prior to 3:00 A.M., informing the security forces in the town that they were "Scouts from New Creek."²⁹ They halted in the street in front of the two hotels where the generals were billeted and split up silently into their respective teams. The guards in front of the hotels passed the rangers by without challenge.

The two parties sent to capture the generals entered the hotels and were directed to the generals' rooms without incident. McNeill had previously briefed both parties to respond to queries by stating that General Rosser's Cavalry Brigade had captured the town. This minor deception was intended to reduce resistance, since the guerrillas were outnumbered several times over by the Federal forces in the town and area surrounding it.³⁰

Kelley's adjutant general pointed out the general's room to the rangers. The men awakened Kelley and told him to get his clothes on as he was their prisoner. When Kelley asked to whom he was surrendering, the guerrilla squad leader replied, "To Captain McNeill, by order of General Rosser."³¹ The rangers took the adjutant and the general out into the street and put them on horses.

A hotel employee directed the rangers to General Crook's room. With two family members of the hotel's owners in the party, they had no trouble locating the room. When the squad leader, Joe Vandiver, entered General Crook's room, he announced to the general his intent. Crook asked his captor whose authority he was under. The ranger responded that it was General Rosser. When General Crook asked if General Rosser was present, Vandiver, who obviously had a good sense of humor, responded, "I am General Rosser. I have 2500 men, and we have surprised

and captured the city."³² Crook meekly joined Kelley downstairs. The rangers did not even awaken the occupants of the adjacent rooms. Major Robert Kennedy, Crook's assistant adjutant general remarked in his official report, "It was done so quietly that others of us, who were sleeping in adjoining rooms to General Crook, were not disturbed."³³

The team sent to gather horses was proceeding apace. When asked by a town constable why they were taking the horses, the rangers responded, "The Rebels are coming, and we are moving these horses to keep them from being captured."³⁴ This response satisfied the constable.

The squad of the guerrillas sent to the telegraph office accomplished their mission as well, although the system would be down but an hour.

Only 25 minutes after entering the town, the rangers took to their horses and rode out quickly, with their mission in the town accomplished. Two generals were in hand, along with one major and a number of horses and unit colors. Congressman James A. Garfield and Major William McKinley, the two future presidents of the United States were undisturbed, but this was understandable given the hurried situation.

The guerrillas were challenged on the outskirts of town, and when they failed to stop, a picket was overheard to say, "Sergeant, shall I fire?" To which the rangers responded, "If you do I'll put you under arrest! This is General Crook's bodyguard and we have no time to waste! The rebels are coming and we are going out to meet them!"³⁵

It was an hour later when McNeill and his prisoners heard the uproar back in Cumberland, but the piecemeal pursuit was ineffective.³⁶ The rangers spotted Federal patrols, but the only loss was four of McNeill's rear guard.³⁷ When General Crook saw one pursuing Federal

unit, he remarked, "So near and yet so far."³⁸ By the time they stopped, the guerrillas would have ridden 154 miles in three days, in sub-freezing temperatures. At Harrisonburg, the prisoners were transloaded into a stagecoach.

When they reached Staunton, General Early's headquarters, Captain McNeill displayed them prominently, no doubt deriving some pleasure from the irony. General Early hosted a dinner for the prisoners, but it is not known if the partisans attended. The guerrillas then loaded onto a train and escorted their charges all the way to Richmond. On the way, they met Mosby, who congratulated them and remarked, "You boys have beaten me badly. The only way I can equal this will be to go into Washington and bring out Lincoln."³⁹ General Crook himself called it, "The most brilliant exploit of the war."⁴⁰ General Robert E. Lee echoed positive sentiments in his official report to the Secretary of War, and efforts to disband the partisan ranger units ceased.⁴¹

Captain Jesse McNeill and his guerrillas set a high standard indeed. Unfortunately, it was too little and too late. Nevertheless, this plan incorporates some of the key operational principles used today. Personnel today contemplating raids to capture individuals would do well to study this successful example along with Mosby's Fairfax Court House raid. This example provides a number of important lessons.

Captain McNeill's was a superbly planned and executed guerrilla warfare mission. With the increasing opposition within the conventional forces, facing disbandment, or loss of legitimacy, such a success was a necessity for Captain McNeill and his partisans. Again, McNeill's plan was bold and audacious, depending on *surprise* for success. In the face of superior military forces, McNeill developed a plan based on excellent intelligence and maximized the advantages of his guerrillas. He planned

and briefed his men superbly, and retained sufficient flexibility to react to unforeseen circumstances. Finally, he was able to obtain critical support from a well-developed network of auxiliary support, which is essential to successful UW or guerrilla operations.

Captain McNeill understood his *objective*. Faced with the opposition to his unit by both friendly and enemy forces, he counted on a tremendous boost to his *credibility* by a bold success. This he achieved. He had an easily understood end state, and all members worked toward it.

The principle of the *offensive* was certainly foremost in this operation. McNeill was aggressive almost to the point of recklessness. Nevertheless, he accomplished his mission with only one shot fired, and did not even wake the other occupants of the hotel. The personal indignity of the arrest of his family and death of his father probably added to his natural boldness.

McNeill obviously followed the principles of *mass* and *economy of force*. He even enhanced his limited troop strength by cleverly briefing his men to claim they were from a large conventional force. He placed his troops at the critical points in sufficient force to accomplish their tasks. His use of local personnel was particularly effective.

McNeill's force maneuvered over 154 miles in three days, under adverse weather conditions. His partisan rangers constantly rode around opposition whenever possible, and moved harder and faster than their pursuers to exfiltrate.

Captain McNeill followed the principle of *unity of command*. While he was the overall mission commander, he designated key subordinate leaders and gave them the latitude to accomplish their missions. He briefed all of the members of his party on the details of

the plan, and improvised upon the remainder. He directed all effort toward a common goal, and the commander's intent was clear. His chain of command, after the capture of Gilmore, was direct.

Security was paramount to McNeill's operation. In the mission, there were no breaches of security. At the same time, McNeill's rangers understood all of the pertinent details of the mission, and their individual roles. Security was not an excuse for overcompartmentation.

Undoubtedly, the operation achieved total *surprise*. McNeill realized that this was a crucial element of the operation, and set his abort criteria to this end. Not only were the pickets and security forces unalerted, except for those captured, but the other occupants of the hotel and security force within the town were unaware of the operation for over an hour, when a hotel employee finally discovered the general missing. No one was aware of the operation until it was successfully completed.

The principle of *simplicity* was considered and each man understood his part of the mission. The plan did not rely upon a number of unrelated activities being completed in sequence for the plan to succeed. Everyone involved in the mission had a simple, well-defined task and executed it to the best of their abilities.

Unconventional Warfare Analysis

By virtue of the guerrilla's nature, he must *understand the operational environment*. Operating in small bands behind enemy lines for extended periods requires some skill in this area. The guerrilla depends on the local populace for much of his support, and the role of the auxiliary and underground is also related to the operational environment. His limited resources make it essential that all operations be targeted to obtain maximum effect in political,

economical, sociological, psychological, geographical, and military aspects. Special operations personnel conducting unconventional warfare must fully understand the friendly as well as hostile leaders and their objectives and strategies in order to maximize effects of guerrilla operations. This makes understanding the imperative paramount to the successful conduct of guerrilla and unconventional warfare.

Obviously, "Stovepipe" Johnson *understood his operational environment*. He carefully judged each of his actions and those of his opponents, and made decisions accordingly. Johnson was flexible in the execution of his plan and reacted properly. He identified key leaders and targeted them carefully, using only the force required. "Stovepipe" correctly assessed and understood the effects and interrelationship of political, economic, psychological, and military considerations.

Mosby was a master of his operational environment. For over three years, John Singleton Mosby made his area of Virginia a very dangerous place for Yankees. Colonel Mosby used every advantage possible to affect the war politically, economically, sociologically, psychologically, geographically, and militarily. He analyzed operations for impact in these areas prior to execution. This was surprising in light of the fact that Mosby had no formal military training, and due to the lack of published material on guerrilla operations, his understanding was largely instinctive. Mosby understood the relationships between the various decision makers, their objectives, and their interactions. He selected targets with some care, and seemed to correctly anticipate Federal actions before they occurred. John Mosby used his small band of partisan guerrillas surgically, and achieved effects far out of proportion to their limited numbers. Finally, he must have been attuned to the local populace, as the guerrilla can not

exist in the heart of enemy territory for over three years without understanding the operational environment.

Jesse McNeill understood his operational environment, but did not demonstrate the mastery of Johnson or Mosby. Perhaps due to his youth and impetuosity, McNeill was prone to be somewhat rash in his operations. He frequently conducted operations with excessive risk, where the reward did not justify the cost. While his capture of Crook and Kelley was a masterful stroke, it was a bright spot in a somewhat cloudy career. McNeill's refusal to cooperate with Harry Gilmore when he arrived as the area commander was a sign of a lack of understanding of the larger picture. A unified effort by the guerrillas, in conjunction with conventional forces, could have had a synergistic effect in the area. Certainly, he was successful, but a better understanding of the operational environment would enabled him to achieve more in the long run.

The special operator must be fully attuned to the *political implications* of his actions. This is especially true in unconventional warfare, where special operations forces may be operating in enemy controlled areas for extended periods. Failure to maintain awareness of the *political implications* may result in missions that are counterproductive or potentially disastrous for the guerrilla. Both friendly and enemy *political implications* must be considered. The military advantage may have to be subordinated to the greater political campaign. The potential impact of seemingly minor decisions may be disproportionately great. For example, the deaths of certain key personnel, in a country with thousands of people dying daily, may help legitimize the insurgents' cause and attract favorable international support.

Johnson clearly recognized the *political implications* of his actions and *engaged the threat discriminately*. While he could have fired on his opponents on several occasions, he only did so when faced with no better alternative. None of his men were injured, nor were any civilians, and only two of the enemy were hit.

Mosby understood the larger aspects of his operations. While the loss of a general was not critical, the capture aided the cause immeasurably in other aspects. Mosby's operations were not solely militarily motivated. The greater implication of an armed band operating with impunity less than twenty miles from the capital, despite large Federal forces in the area is obvious.

McNeill recognized the *political implications* of the raid on Cumberland. He generally accepted the fact that the greatest impact of the guerrilla is not necessarily military. On occasion, however, he let personal feelings and motives interfere with his understanding of the *political implications* of the war. The refusal by McNeill and other guerrilla leaders to acknowledge the command of Harry Gilmore reflects this.

There were no *interagency activities* on any of these missions. Later operations by Mosby would involve the intrigues associated with the Confederate Secret Service, and he was rumored to be connected with the attempted abduction and eventual assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.⁴² The unconventional warfare operations of this era were clean and largely unencumbered by any interagency operation. Today, special operations personnel, involved in virtually any unconventional warfare operation, will find themselves involved in an interservice, interagency, international operation from the very earliest planning stages. Close coordination is required to ensure *unity of effort* and command.

Special operations personnel must *engage the threat discriminately*. This is particularly important when conducting unconventional warfare. Given extremely limited capabilities and resources, commanders must carefully select their missions. Special operations personnel must conduct a thorough target analysis process to ensure the selection of appropriate targets and application of adequate means.

Johnson *engaged the threat discriminately*. He selected an appropriate target, identified the critical nodes, and applied his force to maximize the effect. Timing, location, and risk assessment were critical to the process, and his plan succeeded. "Stovepipe" Johnson built a successful wartime military career on operations similar to this where he applied his force selectively to achieve maximum effects.

Mosby was a master in *discriminate engagement* as well. With a limited force operating in denied territory, Mosby survived by attacking where the Federals were weak and avoiding their strengths. Occasional operations in areas of enemy strength, such as the raid on Fairfax Court House, were thoroughly planned and risk assessed. Only when potential gains offset the potential losses would high risk missions be undertaken.

Early in his military career, McNeill learned *discriminate engagement* of the threat from studying his father's operations. While perhaps not as astute as Johnson or Mosby, the learning curve for the guerrilla is particularly steep and Jesse McNeill survived the war. McNeill's crowning achievement in the capture of Crook and Kelley was a good case study for this SOF imperative.

Due to the protracted nature of unconventional warfare, a consideration of the *long-term effects* of operations is essential. Many operations may be conducted in order to achieve a long-term goal. The

guerrilla must keep the larger picture in mind at all times when planning and conducting operations. Potential short-term successes must be evaluated and prioritized in accordance with contributions to the long-term desired end state. Commanders may direct operations with goals far beyond the subordinate leader's ability to comprehend. Even modern SO target analysis considers the *long-term effects* and requires a stated length and degree of target degradation desired. *Long-term effects* are not limited to military considerations. Political, economical, sociological, psychological, geographical, and military *long-term effects* must be considered as a whole, and military aspects may be less important than certain others.

It is unknown whether Johnson contemplated the *long-term effects* of his actions, but it is likely that he did. It is certain that after the raid, no small number of forces were engaged in defending the border and garrisoning small outposts until later in the war when Grant became the theater commander. Johnson's operations were in accordance with, and frequently in support of, conventional commanders in his area. This task was simplified by the presence of conventional commanders such as Forrest and Morgan who understood the powerful force multiplier of the guerrilla. This emphasizes the requirement for senior commanders today to better understand the capabilities and limitations of SOF, and the missions that SOF can perform in support of their conventional campaign plans.

Mosby frequently considered *long-term effects* in his actions. He conducted operations with an eye toward the impact of his operations on his men, the enemy, and the populace as well. At times, he limited or redirected his operations to minimize damage to the civilian populace. Mosby worked relatively closely with conventional force commanders to coordinate and deconflict his operations.

Similarly, McNeill considered *long-term effects*, but again to a lesser degree than Mosby or Johnson. His rejection of appointed leadership reflects personal goals interfering with the greater goals of the cause.

One of the key efforts of the special operator must be establishing and maintaining his *legitimacy* and *credibility*. This is absolutely critical for the unconventional operator. Without perceived *legitimacy* attracting support of the indigenous populace, defeating the guerrilla is short work for the conventional force. In addition to passive support from the majority, an active support base is a necessity. The auxiliary and underground are drawn from the active base, but without the widespread perceived *legitimacy* and *credibility* of both the cause and the members the effort is doomed to failure. In a high profile operation, *legitimacy* and *credibility* must be conferred by the international community as well. The United States will not provide long-term support for a cause without the perception of international *legitimacy*. Effects of an international effort to delegitimize the government of El Salvador during its 12-year insurgency caused United States' support to wax and wane daily. In the American Civil War, the Federals were able to take advantage of support in certain areas to further their own *legitimacy*, at the expense of the Confederates, but were never able to completely discredit the Confederate cause. While the Confederates enjoyed no small support from the British government, the lack of international recognition kept the Confederates from complete *credibility* and *legitimacy*. When the government is able to delegitimize the guerrilla (or rebel), the cause is lost.

"Stovepipe" Johnson operated in a GWOA that was largely neutral, although under Federal occupation. He established his

legitimacy and *credibility* early on in the conflict, and enjoyed a large following and support base throughout the war.

Mosby directed many of his operations toward *legitimacy* and *credibility*, even to maintaining *legitimacy* with the conventional force commanders. His operational area, however, was Confederate territory under periodic Federal occupation. Because of this, and as a local resident, his local *legitimacy* was probably even more widespread than Johnson's. Mosby insured the *credibility* and *legitimacy* of his force. He did not needlessly jeopardize either his men, the townspeople, or his enemy. He followed all laws and rules governing his forces. The raid we examined helped lend *credibility* to his cause by demonstrating that Mosby had the ability to operate with impunity when and where he chose.

No doubt McNeill added to his *credibility* with the capture of two generals. The threat to his unit by conventional Confederate commanders was halted by a single success. Unfortunately, the operation was of too little magnitude and conducted too late in the war to contribute fully. His *legitimacy* had been questioned by many after the loss of Gilmore, and he never fully regained it.

All unconventional warfare operations must anticipate and control *psychological effects*. All facets of *psychological effects* must be considered, both enemy and friendly. Certain operations may be conducted or not conducted specifically because of potential *psychological effects*. Many times perceptions are more important than reality, and a cooperative media outlet can help to control *psychological effects*. In fact, unless a psychological operations unit is in support of an operation, preparing and disseminating products, the media is the primary outlet for public information. Leaders must seize every opportunity to anticipate and control *psychological effects*

through cooperation with the media. The reporting given to the guerrillas by the Union press was particularly valuable, helping to enflame the anti-war effort. A similar situation occurred with the American press during the Vietnam War.

"Stovepipe" Johnson correctly anticipated and controlled *psychological effects*. His very boldness lent *credibility* to his story. He constructed the "cannon" in advance of his need, and used the threat of destruction of the town to stand down the militia and the Federal force. He ambushed the troop transport knowing full well that his small party of men could not engage in a prolonged firefight, but correctly anticipated that the shock of an ambush might provide the psychological edge he needed.

John Mosby knew that a successful operation to kidnap a Federal general would have a number of positive *psychological effects* on various target audiences. First, the Union press would gleefully report another military debacle, thus degrading support for the military and building anti-war sympathy at the same time. The Southern press would report the glorious and romantic operation of the gallant Mosby, giving the military, guerrillas, his unit, and him, positive publicity and building support for them all. The Federal forces would fear the guerrillas and the bogeyman Mosby, who could carry off a general from his bed in the middle of his fortified camp. The Union generals would probably overreact, tying down additional security forces to protect themselves and imposing harsh measures on the local populace, building support for Mosby. Finally, Mosby's men would begin to believe in their own invulnerability and ability to accomplish any mission under his command. Thus this mission shows the serious considerations given to anticipate and control broad *psychological effects*.

The Cumberland raid by Jesse McNeill was very similar. Unfortunately, by 1865, while the *psychological effects* were indeed a valuable commodity, the civilian populace had already anticipated the outcome of the war. The negative psychological effect on the Northern populace was minimized, and the positive impact on the Southern population was minimized by the news of the dying cause of the Confederacy.

The guerrilla must *apply capabilities indirectly*. This is currently predicated upon the U.S. role of providing advice, training, and assistance to indigenous guerrilla forces, rather than participating as active combatants. The concept is the minimization of U.S. participants to allow the insurgents to conduct the war themselves. All U.S. efforts are intended to reinforce and enhance the guerrilla's effectiveness, *legitimacy*, and *credibility*.

In the historical context, the principle could be applied to maximizing the impact of the guerrilla operations while avoiding unfavorable enemy strengths. Thus, one of the imperatives of the unconventional warrior of the Civil War would be to exploit enemy weaknesses and look for ways to achieve synergistic effects.

"Stovepipe" Johnson chose to *apply capabilities indirectly*. This was manifested with the structure of his force. Only he and Martin were part of the regular Confederate forces. The remainder were volunteers from Kentucky. He chose to expose only a small part of his force, and to deploy the remainder as a deception operation. He also used the threat of his "cannons" on the town to defeat the local militia. This is an excellent example of *indirect application of force*.

Mosby *applied force indirectly* as well. His deception operation with "Big Yankee" Ames was key to the success of his mission. Indeed, he not only used the indigenous population as guerrillas, but

even turned prisoners to his cause. His men were a tremendous force multiplier for the Confederacy, tying down many thousands of Federal troops in static defenses and patrolling to secure an area while he only fought when and where he chose.

McNeill was also effective in *applying capabilities indirectly* as a force multiplier. He used men from the area as members of his organization, and employed them as guides and reconnaissance elements within their communities. This enabled him to gain increased intelligence and local support without having to build a new network of local support.

One absolute requirement for successful operations is the *development of multiple options*. No operation will ever proceed to completion exactly as planned. The more flexible the plan and the leadership, the more likely a mission is to succeed. Contingency planning, or "what if" drills in planning and rehearsals, build multiple options to deal with changes during the operation. Planning and rehearsals by the operators, rather than staff planners, bring potential problems and alternatives to light with the same personnel who will have to react and exercise options. Rehearsals also become valuable tools for development of options in response to identified deficiencies. Civil War personnel appear to have used flexible leadership and the *development of multiple options* during the planning process, as rehearsals appear to be a rare occurrence.

Certainly, "Stovepipe" Johnson had *developed multiple options*. Ever the opportunist, Johnson was nothing if not flexible. When confronted by the unexpected, he either had prepared alternatives or was sufficiently flexible to make it look as if he had.

During the Fairfax Court House raid, Mosby demonstrated his ability to *react to unforeseen circumstances* with flexibility and

multiple options. When his intended target was not present, he identified and captured a bigger one. Colonel Johnstone's interference as they were leaving town almost netted Mosby another commander. The decision to ford the Cub Run, which was unanticipatedly deep, was made and executed quickly. Certain leaders seem to have a knack for improvisation and likely the guerrilla life led to a Darwinian selection process.

The raid by Jesse McNeill demonstrated a *quick and flexible response to changing situations*. From the decision to charge the picket to the changing of the plan to capture a second general, McNeill was flexible and exercised options without hesitation. This ability made his success possible. Special operations personnel today, as well as then, must be able to quickly respond to changing situations and make logical, well thought out decisions.

Special operations personnel must plan for and *ensure long-term sustainment*. While recent operations have had both a start and "no later than" end date, this is atypical of modern warfare. To be successful, modern special operations forces must be prepared to sustain operations for extended periods, particularly in FID or UW operations. Guerrilla forces must be prepared to continue the effort for many years. Frequently, U.S. support for the long-term operation will be subject to peaks and valleys, and SOF must be cognizant of this. The introduction of programs that are not sustainable, except as a recognized surge operation, should be avoided. Technology employed should be affordable, sustainable, and maintainable by the indigenous personnel with a minimum of U.S. assistance. SOF personnel should avoid introduction of unsustainable programs. Guerrillas are particularly vulnerable to this problem. Without the resources of a national infrastructure, most high technology programs become a burden upon both the guerrilla and the

sponsor. Occasionally, the introduction of sophisticated systems is required to counter enemy systems, such as the use of the Stinger missile by the Mujahadin guerrillas in Afghanistan. Guerrillas must rely upon the populace of their area for most support, and a failure to maintain this link invariably leads to failure.

Obviously, Johnson was a master of *ensuring his long term sustainment*. He availed himself of the Federal supply system more than once in his career and was rarely found wanting. He received a great deal of willing support from the people of Kentucky, and his effort was easily sustainable. He continued his guerrilla war against the North until he was sufficiently successful and had recruited enough followers to transition to the conventional war as a cavalry brigade commander for John Morgan. Only his accidental wounding by his troops in August of 1864 prevented him from continuing the fight.

Mosby received more support from the Federal supply system than the Confederate system. Indeed, his operations became a net provider of resources, taking more supplies, weapons, and horses than he could use. His men used the weapons of the guerrilla, and his attempts to use conventional weapons and tactics, such as artillery, generally led to failure. The additional firepower of the cannons was not effective, and they reduced his mobility to less than that of his opponents, which created further problems.

The *long-term sustainment* of Jesse McNeill and his guerrillas was secure. One difference in his operation was the inheritance of an existing organization and infrastructure from his father. McNeill, and to some extent Johnson and Mosby, faced their biggest threat to long-term sustainment from their own government and military structure.

If the *provision of sufficient intelligence* is vital to the special operator, it is doubly so for the guerrilla. While the DA or SR

mission commander can focus on intelligence for a specific target and period of time, and receive information from a number of sources from national level down to HUMINT, the UW commander must frequently gather his own intelligence over a large and diverse area and constantly maintain it for an extended period. He must safeguard that intelligence as well against possible compromise by enemy efforts. Any failure by the guerrilla leader in the intelligence arena could potentially lead to the destruction or compromise of his organization, so he must be eternally vigilant.

Johnson obtained *sufficient intelligence* in advance of his operations. Whether from personal reconnaissance, or from debriefing local personnel, as an irregular, his life depended on it. Again, he conducted reconnaissance personally, relying upon members of his organization indigenous to the area for intelligence gathering, and developed a network of auxiliary and underground members to enhance his intelligence. This sort of utilization of all sources of information and real time intelligence gathering is just as relevant today to successful operations as it was then. Poor intelligence information caused the compromise of a number of SR teams emplaced during the Desert Storm operation.

Similarly, Mosby availed himself of *all available intelligence* assets. The intelligence leading to his Fairfax Court House raid is attributed to some female agents living in the Fairfax Court House community. He also used Sergeant Ames for HUMINT on security procedures and organization of the Federal camp.

McNeill used members of his command to *provide intelligence* for his operations. When he decided to attempt to abduct General Kelley, he sent one of his men to conduct an assessment. Upon the loss of the first agent, he decided to risk another, realizing that the mission was

not possible without detailed intelligence. The second agent, Sergeant Fay, used civilians within the town to provide shelter and close surveillance of the target. McNeill took maximum advantage of his capabilities to obtain the best intelligence possible prior to undertaking the operation. When new information was obtained, he modified his plan to take advantage of the opportunity.

Special operations personnel must avoid the temptation to overcompartment security at the expense of *synchronization*. As FM 100-25 states, "Insufficient security may compromise a mission, but excessive security will almost always cause the mission to fail...."⁴³ Security requirements for guerrilla operations may be more stringent than for DA or SR missions, due to the nature of guerrilla operations. Almost certainly, a cellular structure must be maintained with strict observation of "need to know" restrictions. Once the guerrilla force is assembled for the mission, security requirements become secondary to the requirement for everyone to understand the commander's intent and their role in the mission.

Johnson balanced *security* with *synchronization* well. No security failure occurred, and his force was consistently in the right place to affect the mission. All actions were coordinated and well executed. Martin was adequately informed to continue the mission should Johnson fail. All personnel understood their roles prior to being required to act.

John Mosby was a bit more restrictive. He did not brief key subordinates until the mission was underway. If Mosby had been incapacitated on infiltration, it is highly unlikely any of his subordinates were sufficiently well versed to continue the mission. He did not brief all personnel on the mission until they were within a mile of the objective. Fortunately for Mosby, all went well. This may have

been due to extraordinary planning, good luck, or suspicion on his part, given the relative lack of experience with his personnel. As a consequence of his compartmentation, he may have overlooked some aspect of the mission, and was deprived of the opportunity to conduct a full mission brief prior to infiltration. Finally, with this degree of security, there was no way to conduct a rehearsal, which is a dangerous risk to assume.

McNeill did an excellent job of balancing *security* and *synchronization*. He conducted his first briefing when the men were assembled and offered to let those who were uncomfortable quit. Since none did, we do not know what his plan for *security* was if they accepted. As he refined the plan, he continued to brief the men. While there is no evidence that he conducted rehearsals, he did inspect his men prior to infiltration, which is an important part of mission preparation. Perhaps his thorough briefing of his subordinates was related to the fact that the unit had been operational for several years, and by this time he had developed confidence in his personnel, and vice versa. Regardless, McNeill understood the need to balance *security* and *synchronization*.

In this chapter, an analysis was presented of how unconventional warfare missions were conducted in the War Between the States, and the relevance to modern special operations personnel. Case studies of two modern and three Civil War unconventional warfare operations have been presented, and the Civil War missions were analyzed at the tactical level from the perspective of SOF applications of the principles of war. Finally, each of our Civil War missions was examined with regard to the SOF imperatives and in terms of modern relevance. Obviously, there are lessons to be learned from a historical analysis of

special operations missions. Many key considerations at the tactical level of over a century ago are just as relevant today.

Would examination of the Civil War operations at the strategic level provide the same sort of insights?

Endnotes

- ¹FM 100-25 (1991), 2-6.
- ²Ibid., 2-6.
- ³FM 31-20, 3-1.
- ⁴Jones, ix.
- ⁵OR, V. XXVIII, Pt. I, 994.
- ⁶Michael B. Ballard, "Deceived in Newburg: To Capture an Arsenal," Civil War Times Illustrated XXI (November 1982): 24.
- ⁷Ibid., 24.
- ⁸Ibid., 25.
- ⁹Ibid., 25-26.
- ¹⁰Ibid., 26.
- ¹¹Rick Gutwald, "Low Intensity Conflict as Practiced by John Singleton Mosby in the American Civil War" (MMAS Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1986), 28-30.
- ¹²James J. Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, (New York: Ralph B. Kenyan, 1896), 36.
- ¹³Jeffrey D. Wert, Mosby's Rangers, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 18.
- ¹⁴Ibid., 18.
- ¹⁵OR, V. XXV, Pt. I, 1121-1122.
- ¹⁶Williamson, 39-40.
- ¹⁷Jones, 156-157.
- ¹⁸OR, V. XXXVII, Pt. I, 43.
- ¹⁹Jones, 157.
- ²⁰OR, V. LI, Pt. II, 469.
- ²¹Beamer, 244.
- ²²Jesse McNeill, "Capture of Generals Kelley and Crook," Confederate Veteran, XIV (September, 1906): 410.
- ²³Ibid., 410.
- ²⁴Ibid., 410.

²⁵Ibid., 411.

²⁶Ibid., 411.

²⁷Ibid., 411.

²⁸Ibid., 411.

²⁹Jones, 359.

³⁰OR, V. XLVI, Pt. II, 504.

³¹Jones, 359.

³²Ibid., 360.

³³OR, V. XLVI, Pt. II, 621.

³⁴Jones, 360.

³⁵Ibid., 360-361.

³⁶OR, V. LVIII, Pt. I., 626.

³⁷Ibid., V. XLVI, Pt. II, 469-470.

³⁸Jones, 361.

³⁹Ibid., 361.

⁴⁰Forest J. Bowman, "Capture of Generals Crook and Kelley," Civil War Times Illustrated VII (February 1969): 37.

⁴¹OR, V. LVIII, Pt. I., 472.

⁴¹Ballard, 24.

⁴²William A. Tidwell, April '65: Confederate Covert Action in the American Civil War (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995), 31-37.

⁴³FM 100-25 (1991), 2-18.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Special operations personnel today can learn a number of lessons, both positive and negative, from America's Civil War predecessors. Most of the negative lessons or failures may be traced to a violation of the current doctrine. Positive examples generally reinforce modern doctrine and current guidance.

This examination of lessons learned has so far focused on specific missions at the tactical level. In this final chapter, Civil War special operations will be examined in general and for strategic and operational lessons to be learned specifically. A brief review of tactical special operations will be conducted. The strategic and operational analysis will generally follow the model presented in FM 100-25, Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces. An attempt will be made to identify particularly relevant lessons for modern utilization. First, the Federal special operations effort will be examined at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, and then Confederate special operations from the same perspectives. The Confederate national command and control structure for special operations will be examined, but a comparable Federal system did not exist. Finally, the thesis questions will be revisited to determine what the answers were and the significance of this study to modern SOF.

Federal Special Operations

There was no Federal special operations effort at the strategic level. The Federal government failed to organize or establish any

agency to be charged with the conduct of special operations. No effort was made to develop a national strategic plan to guide commanders in planning direct action, unconventional warfare, special reconnaissance, or any other special operations missions. No target analysis was conducted to identify Confederate critical strategic nodes, industries or infrastructure. The Union also failed to identify any key targets for information collection or reporting. Today, special operations planners at DOD, JCS, USSOCOM, and the theater SOCs ensure that this capability is not overlooked.

With active resistance in North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, the Federal government never directed any effort toward developing the resistances into active movements. As an economy of force measure, an active insurgency directed against strategic Confederate resources, such as the transportation system, would have been tremendously effective. No support was organized or conducted, despite numerous pleas to the Federal government by the people living in these areas. Given the degree of dissatisfaction among large numbers of Confederate residents, a Union sponsored resistance movement would likely have resulted in the termination of the conflict much earlier. Currently, Special Forces provide the unconventional warfare capability of the U.S. military. In most areas of conflict, there are large numbers of people dissatisfied with the situation who can be mobilized into UW forces. While this capability takes time to develop, effective planners will consider this valuable option.

The Confederate economy could have been targeted by the Federals for special operations attacks. Given its tenuous state, a concerted effort by the Federals to disrupt it would have been well worth consideration. In conjunction with the blockade, attacks on the economy may have been able to disrupt the brisk international trade the

Confederacy enjoyed until late in the war. In modern warfare, special operations provides the capability to interdict strategic materials being imported and exported from hostile nations. Specific targets critical to the national economy may be selectively targeted for special operations interdiction.

No Federal effort was made to utilize special operations to secure friendly strategic lines of communication or to protect access to strategic resources. The Union experimented with counter guerrilla units at various times in different theaters, but no organization was created and charged with the responsibility for conducting and coordinating this effort. A "Special Operations Command" tasked to field forces to recruit and organize indigenous personnel to secure strategic resources, such as ports and railroads, would have released thousands of Federal troops conducting these security operations, and most likely, been more effective as well. Modern special operations forces may train and employ indigenous personnel in rear security operations to permit combat forces' employment elsewhere.

Federal special operations could have been conducted, in synchronization with conventional forces, to achieve a synergistic effect. Without the strategic organization to create, coordinate, and direct these efforts, this task was impossible. On many occasions, the need may arise for a force to conduct covert or clandestine operations with strategic implications, but with no apparent near-term effect. The Federal government neglected an entire capability at the strategic level. Today, DOD, JCS, and USSOCOM planners work to firmly integrate special operations at the strategic level to ensure synchronization and integration.

At the theater strategic level, the Federal effort was missing in action as well. Federal departmental commanders occasionally

permitted isolated direct action or counter guerrilla operations, but never coordinated them at the theater level.

Federal special operations could have been directed to attack key transportation, industrial, or storage nodes to assist in altering the momentum and operational tempo of Confederate operations. Special operations direct action missions and a large scale guerrilla uprising, conducted in conjunction with a conventional theater offensive would have been tremendously successful from both a military and a psychological standpoint. As we have seen, this was quite effective during the Second World War. Currently, theater SOCs and special operations planners work to achieve the synergistic effect of special operations and conventional forces.

Federal theater strategic operations could have prevented the Confederacy from conducting contingency operations at the theater strategic level. An excellent example of such an operation would have been another Andrews type raid on the same railroad bridges to prevent Longstreet's reinforcement of the Army of Tennessee in 1863. This type of mission is typical of a special forces or ranger direct action mission today.

Deep special operations could have enabled the Federal theater commanders to extend their operational area far beyond the limits of conventional forces. No ATACMs missiles or other deep strike capabilities existed for the Civil War commanders, and cavalry raids, while spectacular, were impractical against many targets. Today, shortages of deep strike assets, limited attack options, and their restricted time on target makes special operations particularly valuable in these deep operations.

The Federal government was faced with the problem of fighting simultaneously on several widespread fronts. A shortage of trained

forces, particularly early in the war, further handicapped Union operations. An acceptance of risk by conducting primarily special operations on secondary fronts in an economy of force role would have permitted the Federals to effectively mass conventional forces in the main Eastern theater. An aggressive campaign of special operations attacks could have immobilized Confederate forces in the theater and permitted the Federal decision makers at the strategic level much more latitude in their decision making process. With the severe difficulties faced by today's planners with the dual major regional contingency (MRC) or one major and one lesser regional contingency (LRC) requirements, SOF could have a major role in economy of force operations in one of the contingencies.

As stated, the Federal government failed to provide long term support for friendly resistance organizations in enemy strategic rear areas. Given the Federal superiority in naval forces and presence along the Confederacy's coastline, this was particularly short-sighted. The Federal government could have infiltrated personnel, established links with the resistance, and infiltrated equipment to arm, train and lead the resistance in a classic insurgency. This would have created havoc in the Confederate strategic rear areas and siphoned off combat forces to secure disrupted areas. Resistance in North Carolina caused the Confederacy to pull forces from the Petersburg entrenchments to suppress insurrection back home. Currently, special forces have the capability to conduct these operations similar to the OSS support of the French resistance movement of World War II.

At the operational level, Federal forces demonstrated a lack of understanding of the capabilities and effectiveness of special operations, even when confronted with excellent examples by the Confederacy. Federal commanders failed to capitalize on operational SO

by integrating special operations into campaign planning through commander's intent, mission priorities, incorporation into future operations, and tasks to component commanders. Today, SOCs and SOCOORDs must constantly strive to ensure that special operations capabilities are well known to the planning staff and SOF is optimally employed by the operational commander.

The Federal forces failed to effectively organize and employ personnel to collect and report target data and other information of operational significance. This failure to conduct special reconnaissance at the operational level exacerbated the problems within the targeting process and prevented the commander from obtaining vital real time intelligence as to enemy forces, dispositions, and potential weaknesses. During the Peninsular Campaign, this shortage of accurate operational intelligence led Federal General McClellan to continually retreat in the face of numerically inferior Confederate forces. Modern special operations forces are well trained and equipped to collect and deliver operationally significant intelligence for targeting and planning.

Federal commanders generally failed to use troops at hand to organize special operations forces. This lack of special operations forces led to a general failure to recognize and attack targets that were susceptible to special operations. Intelligent planners would use SOF to identify and attack selected high value targets and interdict operational level target systems. Federal forces failed to do so, except in isolated cases such as Andrews. The ad hoc nature of the Federal units employed on this sort of mission during the Civil War frequently led to mission failure. Competent special operations forces can not be created overnight. The Son Tay raiders planned for six months and rehearsed for over three months prior to their operation.

Clearly, the Federal forces lacked an existing SOF capability and never achieved one. Special operations personnel today at SOCs, SOCOORDs and SOCCEs ensure that high value targets and systems are identified and where appropriate, interdicted by SOF.

Federal commanders at the operational level failed to realize that small numbers of special operations forces employed on direct action, special reconnaissance, or unconventional warfare operations could divert large numbers of forces to security operations and away from the main effort. This is a significant economy of force operation. Modern SOF train for this and SOF staff members ensure that conventional planners understand this capability.

At the tactical level, Federal forces failed to conduct special operations within their limited capability. The Andrews raid was typical of failures at the tactical level. The detailed analysis of that ill-fated mission should suffice to identify shortcomings in Federal tactical level special operations. Difficulties in planning, organizing, intelligence gathering, rehearsing, equipping, targeting, infiltration, actions on the objective, and exfiltration are representative. Current special operations personnel at the tactical level are cognizant of these problems and seek to avoid them by professional planning and execution by well trained and equipped SOF units. Flexibility and thorough planning prior to any SO mission helps ensure that the mistakes common to Civil War operations are anticipated and overcome. Nevertheless, historical examples will enrich the background of any professional special operator.

Confederate Special Operations

The Confederacy was tremendously more effective in its special operations than the Union. While not perfect, the Confederacy was developing a bold and innovative approach to special operations. This

was likely due to the fact that it was more limited in resources, requiring economy of force measures and desperate gambles. Indeed, Confederate special operations did not hit their stride until the autumn of 1864. Direct action, unconventional warfare and intelligence gathering were all conducted by the Confederates, particularly late in the war.

Although the command and control mechanism was in some ways deficient, in many regards it was revolutionary for its time. Records of Confederate special operations are incomplete due to the damage to Richmond during the Confederate withdrawal, the intentional destruction of records, the ravages of time, and finally, the clandestine or covert nature of many of these operations. Nevertheless, surviving records reveal a multifaceted and in many cases unnecessarily redundant national command and control structure. The organizations included:

State Department Secret Service: Under the command and control of Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, this department was primarily responsible for special operations missions abroad. Agents were capable of direct action, intelligence gathering, espionage, and sabotage. The modern equivalent of this organization would probably be the Central Intelligence Agency.²

War Department Secret Service: A component of the War Department, normally managed by the Signal Bureau. Responsible for primarily intelligence gathering from the strategic down to the tactical level, with many agents attached to tactical unit commanders. Today, these responsibilities would be covered by the Defense Intelligence Agency, Military Intelligence, and selected special operations units.³

War Department Signal Bureau and Signal Corps: In addition to providing the Army's telegraphic and communications support, this department also operated the Secret Line transmitting intelligence data

from Washington separately from the War Department Secret Service. Reconnaissance and intelligence gathering was conducted in tidewater Virginia. Proponency for these missions today would be the Signal Corps, Military Intelligence, and special operations units.³

The Richmond Provost Marshal: This office operated throughout the war in an intelligence gathering and protective role, providing counterespionage and counterintelligence support for the area, and allegedly supporting the State Department Secret Service. Today, this responsibility would rest with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, Military Intelligence, and the Military Police.⁴

War Department Torpedo Bureau: This unit was responsible for developing and deploying the land based explosive devices as well as the emplacement of selected underwater mines and the James River minefields. Direct action missions such as the City Point operation were the special operations focus of this office. Currently, this organization would correspond to Special Forces or SEAL units.⁵

Navy Submarine Battery Service: This was the Naval counterpart to the Torpedo Bureau, responsible for the majority of underwater mining operations. This office also operated "torpedo boats" that were ramming vessels with explosive "torpedoes." The men of this service managed to sink or damage over 40 Federal vessels during the war. The modern counterpart for this service would be the Navy, SEALs, or Special Forces.⁶

War Department Strategy Bureau: A highly classified cover office for direct action sabotage teams utilizing demolitions and developmental weapons; the activities of this office are relatively unknown. One operation involved the development of a bomb disguised as a lump of coal that was successfully deployed and utilized against

Federal shipping. This department would correspond to modern Special Forces, with other departments assisting in the technological development of new weapons.⁷

The Greenhow Group: The intelligence gathering group was originally organized as a State of Virginia operation. Operating behind the lines and in Washington, D.C., this organization was an unconventional warfare operation composed of primarily civilian personnel collecting intelligence for the Army of Northern Virginia at a theater strategic or operational level. This organization would currently be a spying operation and likely controlled by a national level intelligence agency. It is possible that Special Forces could be authorized to conduct this sort of collateral UW activity, but approval would be required at the highest levels.⁸

Cavalry Scouts: This organization was formed by General Stuart to provide the Army of Northern Virginia with tactical and operational level intelligence. The activities of this group come closest to the modern special reconnaissance mission, intermixing tactical reconnaissance with operational and strategic intelligence gathering. Unfortunately, their activities are largely undocumented with little in the way of primary sources. Modern counterparts would be Special Forces and Navy SEALs.

The Peace Commission: Based in Canada, the Peace Commission was responsible for organizing, funding and conducting the cross-border operations such as the Northwest Conspiracy, the attempt to seize the USS Michigan, the raids in Calais and St. Albans, and the New York City fires and draft riots. An active group, the Peace Commission was well funded and had a number of excellent military personnel. They conducted direct action, unconventional warfare, and intelligence gathering operations. Unfortunately, the operations were late in the war with

marginal leadership at the upper levels, and prone to penetration and compromise. Today, this operation would probably be an interagency effort combining many of the organizations cited above, much as the U.S. covert and clandestine cross-border operations throughout Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.¹⁰

While this array of Confederate organizations may appear bewildering, today we have a similar mix of forces. One of the primary differences is the somewhat clearer command and control situation under USSOCOM on the military side and the CONUS/OCONUS delineation of responsibilities on the civilian side. A single headquarters at the strategic level with overall responsibility greatly simplifies and deconflicts planning and operational issues. The Confederacy was instrumental in the development of special operations but could have benefited greatly from a similar command and control structure.

The Confederates realized that at the strategic level they could target and attack the national will of the Union populace. This was effectively attempted during the Northwest Conspiracy and the Copperhead Movement, the attempt to burn New York City, and the various draft riots throughout the North. The South realized that if the dissident segment of the Northern population could be expanded, that the Federals would be forced to sue for peace. For these reasons, the South targeted the will of the Northern population as a strategic target. Given the importance of national will in conflicts today, this would be a critical target for SOF, particularly in targeting, psychological operations, and information warfare.

The Confederate spy operation and intelligence gathering apparatus was well organized and funded. This operation collected a large amount of strategic intelligence, particularly in Washington, D.C. The Greenhow group was particularly active in this area. Currently, if

employed in the HUMINT aspect of intelligence gathering, SOF would work in close cooperation with other agencies.

The role of the Confederacy in sponsoring insurgency in Federally controlled areas has been well documented. Efforts were made at the strategic level to finance and support opposition parties within the North and to foment dissent and revolt. Today, Special Forces would conduct the same operations under national control.

Efforts were made to disrupt the Federal economy, but not at the strategic level. This may have been due to the limited capability of the Confederacy to accomplish operations of the required scale to influence the Northern economy. Discussion was made of conducting a major privateering campaign and Confederates conducted limited commerce raiding, but to limited effect other than driving Federal shipping to foreign flags. Today, SOF would work in conjunction with conventional forces to attack the enemy economy at the strategic level.

The Confederacy did little to utilize SOF to protect friendly strategic lines of communication (LOCs) and access to strategic resources. These efforts were largely left to local militia and Guard units that were ill equipped and poorly motivated. Even when Federal forces conducted strategic operations against these LOCs, the South did little to protect itself. Sherman's march through the heartland of the South was not targeted by special operations. Modern SOF would work to organize resistance operations and partisan activity to assist conventional forces in securing friendly LOCs and access to strategic resources.

At the theater strategic level, Confederate special operations were again more effective than their Federal counterparts. Confederate direct action missions and unconventional warfare operations were directed to alter the momentum and tempo of Federal operations.

Guerrilla raids such as Mosby's were intended to interdict Federal sustainment operations and interfere with their operational tempo. Direct action missions such as the cross-border operations and sabotage missions were designed to divert Federal forces from operational units to security missions. Today, SOF would work on similar missions in a more coordinated and better focused effort to identify and interdict key nodes of transportation and distribution systems.

Confederate special operations also attempted to prevent the Federal forces from conducting contingency theater strategic operations. Confederate attacks against personnel and operational stocks and requiring the diversion of reserves attempted to delay several Federal operations. As mentioned in the City Point mission analysis, coordinated simultaneous attacks against Federal munitions stocks could have had a significant impact on Federal ability to conduct offensives. Present day SOF would conduct a thorough target analysis in an attempt to identify and destroy hostile capability to conduct contingency theater strategic operations. Present day special operations forces would work in conduction with conventional forces to attack enemy theater strategic reserves and stockpiles of critical resources.

Confederate special operations were designed to support theater-level operations deep beyond the limits of conventional military forces. Given the relatively shallow nature of the Eastern theater, this was more readily visible in the Western theater. In the West, deep operations were conducted by "Stovepipe" Johnson and other guerrilla leaders throughout Federal occupied Kentucky and Tennessee ranging into the Federal breadbaskets of Ohio and Indiana. While the great Confederate cavalry leaders such as Morgan and Forrest would occasionally venture into the North, the guerrillas maintained a continual presence, contributing to the Confederacy's legitimacy in the

region. Unconventional warfare and direct action missions today would work toward similar goals, using a mix of both low and high technology weapons to conduct deep attacks. Additionally, real time communications capabilities permit modern SOF to identify high value targets and attack them during brief periods of exposure, such as SCUD missile launchers and other mobile WMD delivery systems.

Given the secondary nature of the Western theater, Confederate guerrillas performed a valuable economy of force mission for the conventional commanders. Far from the drain on scarce military manpower they were assumed to be, the guerrillas kept an inordinate amount of Federal forces tied down in an effort to secure LOCs and pacify areas. In the East as well, partisan leader Colonel John S. Mosby observed,

To have fought my own command daily, on equal terms and in open combats against the thousands that could have been brought against it by the North, would have soon resulted in its entire annihilation. I endeavored to compensate for my limited resources by stratagems, surprises and night attacks, in which the advantage was generally on my side, notwithstanding the superior numbers we assailed. For this reason, the complaint has often been made against me that we would not fight fair . . . in one sense the charge that I did not fight fair is true. I fought for success and not for display. There was no man in the Confederate army who had less of the spirit of knight-errantry in him, or took a more practical view of war than I did.¹³

Special operations forces today can perform similar functions; particularly as stated earlier to buy time in a dual MRC situation.

The Confederacy worked to provide long term support of friendly resistance organizations in enemy strategic rear areas. This was particularly evident in the Peace Commission's support of anti-war parties in the North. Confederate agents provided funding and support to numerous opposition parties. Unfortunately, on the eve of the planned uprising, Federal agents compromised the operation and sent the movement into hiding. Today, Special Forces provides the capability to develop and employ resistance movements deep in denied areas.

At the operational level, while the Confederate special operators were more effective than their Federal counterparts, there remained much room for improvement. In most special operations missions, there was little or no coordination between the SO and conventional operational commanders. Again, the synergy that results from synchronized and coordinated efforts was absent, and the successes were more limited. The requirement for the special operations leadership and planners to understand the campaign plan and integrate into it, along with the operational commander's intent, priorities, future operations, and tasks to component commanders is critical to a coordinated effort.

Confederate special operations personnel were able to collect and report target data as well as other information of operational significance. Unfortunately, this capability was severely hampered by the lack of designated special operations units with the capability to conduct special reconnaissance and the primitive communications capability. Currently, SOF has a much better capability to gather intelligence at the operational and strategic level and report it as real time intelligence, giving the operational commander yet another collection asset with unique capabilities. Unfortunately, the intelligence community frequently is unfamiliar with this type of intelligence and is unable or unwilling to exploit it. It is incumbent upon SOF command and control cells such as SOC's and SOCCEs to work closely with conventional staff personnel to maximize exploitation of opportunity intelligence gained from these assets.

The Confederate special operators worked to attack high value targets and to interdict operational target systems. The actions of Confederate guerrillas to interdict the Baltimore and Ohio railroad and keep it closed were key to Confederate conventional operations. Mosby

himself stated, "One of the most effective ways of impeding the march of an army is by cutting off its supplies; and this is just as legitimate as to attack in line of battle."¹² SOF today would be directed against similar targets and systems. Special operations personnel must be aware that seemingly minor targets may have implications far beyond the obvious and must be interdicted as directed. Indirect attacks may result in targeting of secondary nodes and targets in support of other operations.

The goal of the Confederate guerrillas and direct action personnel to divert Federal forces from the main effort is particularly noteworthy. As Colonel Mosby said, "The military value of a partisan's work is not measured by the amount of property destroyed or the number of men killed or captured, but by the number he keeps watching."¹³ Cross-border direct action operations were largely conducted with the intent of diverting Federal forces from the front to security operations in the rear. Special operations personnel must realize that success may be as Mosby stated, less a matter of physical impact than psychological.

Confederate special operations at the tactical level were substantially more effective than Federal efforts, but were also much more numerous. Important lessons to be learned at the tactical level indicate that special operations missions that are bold and audacious, well-planned and flexibly executed by trained professionals with adequate intelligence and thorough rehearsals are likely to succeed even in the face of tremendous odds. These lessons are just as valuable to the special operator today. These same lessons have proven their validity throughout the history of special operations from the Trojan Horse to current missions around the globe. It is incumbent for us as special operations leaders to observe these lessons and incorporate them into our operations to insure mission success and minimize losses.

Review

This thesis has demonstrated that the lessons to be learned from our Civil War predecessors are just as valid today as in the past. At the strategic, theater strategic, operational, and tactical levels, there are lessons of value to modern special operations personnel. Particular concerns have been addressed and modern implications discussed.

Previous chapters outlined the reasons for this thesis and examined the record of special operations in the American Civil War to determine if there were insights to be gained. Key terms were defined and present special operations doctrine was described. Finally, modern terms and doctrine were defined as they would be applied to historical examples from the War Between the States.

An analysis was conducted of selected Civil War direct action missions from the perspective of modern SOF doctrine for relevant lessons to be learned for modern special operations forces. An examination was made of the Andrews' Raid of April 1862, the October 1864 raid on Saint Albans, Vermont, the September 1864 raid on the USS Michigan to free the Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island, and the mission of August 1864 to destroy the City Point, Virginia ordnance depot.

Selected Civil War unconventional warfare missions were examined for lessons to be learned as well. "Stovepipe" Johnson's Newburg, Indiana Raid of July 1862, Mosby's Fairfax Court House Raid of March, 1863, and Jesse McNeill's Raid on Cumberland, Maryland Raid of February, 1865 were each studied for modern applicability. Each revealed some important considerations for today's special operations personnel.

While mission planning can not be invariably based on historical precedents or doctrine, history has been proven to hold valuable lessons and modern special operations doctrine has been proven valid. There are ample lessons to be learned at all levels, from strategic to tactical.

The thesis affirmatively answered the primary research question if there were special operations lessons to be learned from the American Civil War. The secondary question was also affirmatively answered whether we can define certain Civil War operations and units as special operations. The lessons to be learned were stated, as well as their applicability today. In the final analysis, modern doctrine, while not without flaws, is historically relevant and may be effectively applied to Civil War special operations for lessons learned.

Endnotes

¹Tidwell, 31-37.

²Ibid., 31-41.

³Ibid., 31-45.

⁴Ibid., 31-47.

⁵Ibid., 31-49.

⁶Ibid., 31-50.

⁷Ibid., 31-53.

⁸Ibid., 31-54.

⁹Ibid., 31-55.

¹⁰Ibid., 31-56.

¹¹John S. Mosby, Mosby's War Reminiscences and Stuart's Cavalry Campaigns. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1887), 158.

¹²Ibid., 175.

¹³Ibid., 211.

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thirty men and fifty-eight horses over to Colonel Fitzhugh Lee, a classmate of General Stoughton's.

President Lincoln, when told of the affair, commiserated, "Well, I'm sorry for that, I can make brigadier generals, but I can't make horses."¹⁹

Mosby's raid was a tremendous success. Again, we can see the same characteristics of a successful operation. Mosby was bold, audacious, and had excellent intelligence. He conducted a thorough reconnaissance, planned the mission considering all factors of METT-T, and briefed all personnel at the appropriate time. Lieutenant Mosby also planned his infiltration, exfiltration and actions on the objective. He took advantage of the element of *surprise*, and used deception as an integral part of the plan. These same considerations are just as critical to the special operator today.

Clearly, John S. Mosby understood his *objective*. While he intended the mission to capture a specific enemy commander, he realized the impression that this raid would have and remained flexible in execution. When the primary target was absent, he quickly selected and secured a bigger prize, exhibiting great flexibility. Mosby counted on and received a tremendous boost to his *credibility* by this bold success. The Fairfax Court House raid legitimized his unit, methods, and despite opposition from conventional commanders like Fitz Lee, he validated his command. His desired end state was clear, and all members worked toward it.

Mosby was always attuned to the principle of the *offensive*, and this operation was no exception. He was aggressive when necessary, pushing the envelope of good judgment to the very edge. He accomplished his mission with a minimum of violence, and used the threat only as needed.